

IN THE
LAND OF MISFORTUNE

BY

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AUTHOR OF 'ABEL AVENGED,' 'ACROSS PATAGONIA,' 'A DEFENCE OF
ZULULAND AND ITS KING.'

WITH ILLUSTRATIONS

FROM SKETCHES BY

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ENGRAVED BY WHYMPER AND PEARSON



'INKOS.'

RICHARD BENTLEY AND SON

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TO
THE LATE
CHARLES DARWIN, ESQ.,

THESE PAGES ARE RESPECTFULLY DEDICATED,
ONE WHO WAS HONoured WITH HIS FRIENDSHIP,
AND TO WHOM HIS WORKS HAVE EVER
BEEN A SOURCE OF ADMIRATION
AND DELIGHT.

*Like a meteor flashing its new-born light
He arose on a sleeping world,
And his brilliance illumined the darksome night,
And his deeds the truth unfurled.*

*He told mankind what it trembled to learn,
What mocking it strove to stay,
And what it incredulous sought to spurn
He exposed to the light of day:*

*Passed onwards whither no science can tell,
In the first sweet burst of morning,
He has left the light of his magic spell,
A waking world adorning.*

*And the sun has sunk in the golden west,
And Phæbe holds her reign,
Tis but the calm of a midnight rest,
He will wake the world again.*

FLORENCE DIXIE.

July 24, 1882.



STALKING UNDER DIFFICULTIES.

CONTENTS.

CHAPTER I.

A DAY DREAM—DEPARTURE FROM ENGLAND—MADEIRA
EXPERIENCES—DISASTROUS NEWS . . . Pages 1-8

CHAPTER II. .

CAPE TOWN EXPERIENCES—VISIT TO THE ZULU KING—OFF
AGAIN—THE WILD MAN'S LAND—TRANSPORT LANDING
—A BLACK HOLE OF CALCUTTA . . . 9-20

CHAPTER III.

FORMING A STUD—AN UNENVIABLE EXISTENCE—PLAYED OUT
 —USEFUL ALLIES—A PAINFUL SCENE—AQUATIC OXEN
 —NATIONAL GLOOM—ROUGH EXPERIENCES Page 36

CHAPTER IV.

PASSAGE OF THE BIGGARSBERG—WOUNDED SOLDIERS—OUR
 FIRST DINNER AT FORT AMIEL—A CROSS COUNTRY RIDE
 —A FACER—THE INGOGO BATTLEFIELD—A GALLANT ACT
 36-48

CHAPTER V.

THE GREAT GOD SUN—COLOSSAL DREAMS—A GENERAL IN
 JEOPARDY—LANGE'S NEK—THE ASCENT OF THE AMAJUBA
 —UNFORTUNATE BUT BRAVE—HUNGRY AS HUNTERS—
 FEASTING AND PLEASURE. 49-63

CHAPTER VI.

A SOUTH AFRICAN GRAND MILITARY—THE RACECOURSE—
 THE FATE OF JOHN GILPIN—A HUNTING EXPEDITION—
 SUCCESSFUL TRAVELLING—WATCHING A WALKER—AN
 INVALUABLE SERVANT—FINAL DIRECTIONS. 64-77

CHAPTER VII.

ABUNDANT NATURE—THE DOLCE FAR NIENTE—WANDERING
 ANTELOPES—A WOUNDED HARTEBEE—A DISAPPOINT-
 MENT—SUCCESS—AFTER LABOUR COMETH REST. 78-90

CHAPTER VIII.

ANOTHER SUCCESS—AN ARDUOUS CLIMB—A NATIVE LEVÉE—
BAREBACKED RIDING—A ROUGH NIGHT—SURROUNDED
FIRE—DISCOMFORT—AN AFTER-DINNER RIDE

Pages 91-105

CHAPTER IX.

DEPARTURE FOR POTCHEFSTROOM—AN INCAUTIOUS OFFER—
ENGLISH PRESTIGE—FIRST COME, FIRST SERVED—A HOT
DISCUSSION 106-114

CHAPTER X.

EARLY RISING—BLOBS—A WEARY MARCH—A RASH ATTEMPT
—AN ANXIOUS MOMENT—A HOT CORNER 115-126

CHAPTER XI.

THE MONOTONY OF TREKKING—A TRIUMPHANT ENTRY—
PLAYING AT SOLDIERS—DISAPPOINTMENT—AN EXCITING
RIDE—THE LAWS OF SPORT 127-138

CHAPTER XII.

A GENERAL HOLIDAY—A BAD SHOT—AN INNOCENT ENJOY-
MENT—AN ALARM—HEIDELBERG—A BOER LEADER—
KLIP RIVER 139-152

CHAPTER XIII.

A COLD MORNING—POTCHEFSTROOM—TRIUMPHAL ENTRY!
 —DISGUST—THE RUINED FORT—A SORTIE—FRESH
 PLANS Pages 11

CHAPTER XIV.

SUNRISE ON POTCHEFSTROOM—FAREWELL POTCHEFSTROOM—
 . FRUITLESS INTERROGATION—TWO WELCOMES—DISTANCE
 CALCULATED BY TIME—AN AGREEABLE SURPRISE—AN
 UNSAVOURY MESS—A GENIAL COMPANION—CAMPING
 OUT—A LONELY GRAVE—PRETORIA HO!—DEVOTION OF
 PUNCH—A MIDNIGHT LETTER 167-191

CHAPTER XV.

PLEASANT ANTICIPATION—GOVERNMENT HOUSE—TAKING IT
 EASILY—STRUBEN'S FARM—A WASTE OF LEAD—A BOER
 CHAMPION—IMAGINATION'S DREAM 192-203

CHAPTER XVI.

THE ROYAL COMMISSION—SECRECY—A NATIVE DEPUTATION
 —THE BLACK MAN'S PRAYER—THE WONDERBOOM—A
 STRONG POSITION—IN FAIRYLAND—THE LAST NIGHT

CHAPTER XVII.

DEPARTURE—AN EARLY BREAKFAST—AN UNCOMFORTABLE
 DRIVE—A SIMPLE MEAL—PATAGONIA ONCE MORE—
 HEIDELBERG AT LAST—A DRUNKEN CONVOY—STANDERTON
 ONCE MORE—AN ALARM OF “BOERS”—LUDICROUS
 THEFTS—MEMORIES OF MAJUBA Pages 218-237

CHAPTER XVIII.

A PROJECTED RIDE THROUGH ZULULAND—A FORBIDDEN EXPE-
 DITION—AN AMUSING DISCUSSION—MILITARY HOSPITALITY
 —A BOER’S SLAVE—THE SLAVE’S GRATITUDE—ROUGH
 TRAVELLING—DE BEER’S PASS—CLIMBING THE DRAKENS-
 BERG—CROSSING THE BOUNDARY—MUSIC HAS CHARMS
 238-257

CHAPTER XIX.

ONWARD ONCE MORE—AN AWKWARD POSITION—PREPARATIONS
 FOR DEFENCE—AMIDST REPUBLICANS—DISCOMFORT AND
 REMONSTRANCE—ESCAPING A WETTING—ON THE VERGE
 OF DESTRUCTION—GIVING DIRK THE SLIP—THE WORLD
 IS VERY SMALL—A RACE FOR THE POST-CART—A WARM
 WELCOME 258-277

CHAPTER XX.

KIMBERLEY—THE MINES OF FORMER DAYS—A GOVERNMENT
 REFUGE—GOVERNMENT PROVISIONS—DIAMOND WASHING

AND SORTING—"COMING EVENTS CAST THEIR SHADOWS BEFORE"—AWAKING SLUMBERS—OFF THE ROAD—AN UNCOMMUNICATIVE BOER—LIFE'S LAST STRUGGLE—PROLONGED GREETINGS—THE GREAT GOD SLEEP—AN ORIGINAL PONY—OVERTURNED—DRUNKEN RHAPSODY

Pages 21

CHAPTER XXI.

PREPARATION FOR ZULULAND—MORNING OF DEPARTURE—A SCRAMBLE FOR BREAKFAST—A SCENE OF CONFUSION—HORRIBLE CRUELTY—NO WATER—BRIDGE-MAKING—AN UNWELCOME ORDER—SEKETWAYO AND CETSHWAYO

306-322

CHAPTER XXII.

KAMBULA—PLEASANT REMINISCENCES—A DUSKY BEAUTY—FOR KING AND COUNTRY—THE HEROISM OF MIGHT AND RIGHT—NATURE'S BEAUTEOUS SCENE—A BANQUET

323-335

CHAPTER XXIII.

A SECOND EXPEDITION—AN AGREEABLE COMPANION—A RIDE TO THE INHLOBANE—"INKOS"—A LONELY GRAVE—THE DEATH OF RONALD CAMPBELL—INTENSE THIRST—DESCENT OF THE DEVIL'S PASS—THE GRATEFUL LUXURY OF EASE

336-352

CHAPTER XXIV.

DISAPPOINTED HOPES—A GOOD SHOT—A ZULU AUDIENCE—A SCENE OF BITTER MEMORY—A RAY OF GOLD—THE

SIMPLE SAVAGE—DRENCHING RAIN—AN UNPLEASANT NIGHT—A SCENE OF DEATH AND DESOLATION—THE RAPE OF THE BREAD BAG—THE LAST EFFORT OF EXPIRING ANGER—THE INHSLAZATYE . . . Pages 353-376

CHAPTER XXV.

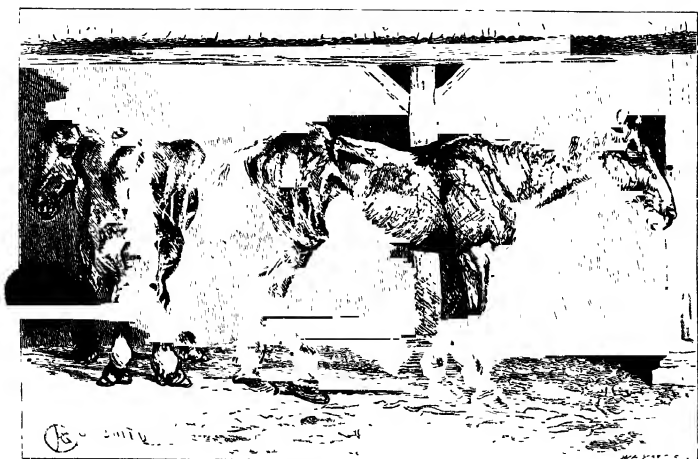
THE INHSLAZATYE MEETING—GOD SAVE THE QUEEN—PROCEEDINGS COMMENCED—THE TRUTH ABOUT ZULULAND—HELD IN BONDAGE—SEPARATION—A PEEP AT JOHN DUNN'S HAREM—A MID-DAY OFF-SADDLE—MOURNFUL MEMORIES—LAST DAY WITH THE TROOPS . 377-395

CHAPTER XXVI.

A NATIONAL DESIRE—OPPRESSION—THE BLOODY HAND—THE MONUMENT OF NATURE—THE LAST OF ZULULAND—UMSINGA—BLOBBS IN JEOPARDY—SIR EVELYN WOOD IN SWAZILAND—REGRET—VELDT COSTUMES—AN ABIGAIL'S OPINION OF CAPE TOWN 396-416

CHAPTER XXVII.

CETSHWAYO—THE KING'S WORDS—ENGLAND'S PROMISE—THE MODERN JUDAS—THE KING'S MESSAGE TO ENGLAND—REASONING—A KINGLY RESIDENCE!—THE VISIT TO GOVERNMENT HOUSE—A DREAM OF THE PAST 417-434



GOVERNMENT REMOUNTS,
on which our gallant officers were expected to do great things

LIST OF ILLUSTRATIONS.

SIT TIGHT!	<i>Frontispiece</i>
NEWCASTLE FROM FORT AMIEL	<i>To face page 38</i>
KAFFIR SERVANTS	„ 50
LANGE'S NEK AND BOER TRENCHES AS SEEN FROM SUMMIT OF AMAJUBA	„ 56
KAFFIR WOMAN AND CHILD	„ 96
THE TELL-TALE MOON	„ 126
OUR CAMP ON THE KLIP RIVER	„ 150
„ The March to Potchefstroom.	
FORSAKEN BY ENGLAND	„ 208
“Burial of the British Flag at Pretoria by the English residents, on the cession of the Transvaal to the Boers.”	

THE AMAJUBA OR ROCK OF MANY PIGEONS *To face page 236*

On Amajuba's heights they sleep,
 And 'neath its darkling shelter lie;
 O'er its gaunt crag soft zephyrs creep,
 In mourning dirge and wailing cry.

There stars will ever shed their light,
 The sun will gild each rising morn,
 And Nature's carpet soft and bright
 The soldier's lonely grave adorn.—F. D.

AN OSTRICH SALE AT LADYSMITH	„	320
SEKETWAYO'S HEIR	„	362
ITYOTYOTSI	„	370
Memorial Cross erected on the spot where the Prince Imperial fell.		
THE RAPE OF THE BREAD BAG	„	374
THE INHSLAZATYE OR EVERGREEN MOUNTAIN	„	380
MEETING OF ZULU CHIEFS AT THE INHSLA- ZATYE, Aug. 31, 1881	„	402
A FOOLISH BUT HAPPY FORELOUPER	„	
A scene on the march through Zululand.		



THE LAND OF MISFORTUNE.

CHAPTER I.

A DAY DREAM — DEPARTURE FROM ENGLAND — MADEIRA
EXPERIENCES — DISASTROUS NEWS.

So it was decided that I should go Southward
Ho!

Every preparation had been made for the far North-West,—guides, hunters, and Indians had been all engaged beforehand; the journey across the ice-bound land of North America had been planned, even to the crossing of Behring's Straits, and a winter's sojourn on the mystic Arctic shores of far-off Tuski Land, where, amidst a strange people and almost unknown country, I had hoped to study the manners and customs of this Asiatic tribe, and find in the solitude of those wintry scenes the loneliness which at times it is so sweet to find.

But it was ordained otherwise; and, without

entering into the causes which eventually arose to cloud this day dream, it is sufficient to say that circumstances occurred at the last moment which rendered it impossible for the expedition to be carried out.

Far away from these still and silent scenes other scenes of a very different character were being enacted. The cloud of war hung over South Africa, and the news which was sent over the seas, and read by every Englishman with eagerness and avidity, was not of that reassuring character to fill his breast with hope or confidence. Our repulse at Lange's Nek, together with the serious loss sustained, had already set a nation mourning—alas! the climax had not yet come.

In the heat of battle, when excitement is at its pitch, there is scant time to attend to the wounded and the suffering. When the hospital is reached, ministering hands await them, and everything is done to alleviate both pain and injury. But in many cases the mortally stricken soldier is left to his last agony on the spot whereon he fell, unheeded as the tide of battle flows; and the one who might bring relief and tenderness to soothe his last moments is not always by.

It was in this capacity that I decided to proceed at once to South Africa. A few days'

preparation was all that was needed; and the appointment, in addition, by Sir Algernon Borthwick of myself as correspondent of the *Morning Post* gave the object I had in view a double duty and interest.

Accompanied by my husband, and attended by one man-servant, I left England within a week following the decision I had arrived at. We embarked on board the Donald Currie s.s. *Warwick Castle* at Dartmouth, and with the last creak of the upheaving anchor, and the vibration of the screw, I felt that once more old England was to be parted with, and perhaps seen no more.

We were singularly fortunate in our passengers, and many hours did not elapse ere every one had more or less made friends. There were Lord Ebrington, and his sister Lady Mary Fortescue, passengers to Madeira; and Major Merriman, Captain Charles Beresford, and Lieutenants Hedley and Ruck, all of the Royal Engineers, proceeding to join the forces in Natal. Captain Hallam Parr, late secretary to Sir Bartle Frere, was also on his way to South Africa to replace as military secretary to Sir George Colley poor Macgregor, who had been lately killed. In addition there were many others amongst the large crowd of passengers that filled the *Warwick*

Castle with whom a speedy acquaintanceship was struck up.

What a motley, diversified lot does not a passenger ship bring together! Thereon one comes across people of every nationality and occupation, who in their daily intercourse become bound by a kind of friendship arising out of that feeling of loneliness which the presence of a ship mid ocean always inspires. It is, as it were, their island, to which the shipwrecked mariners cling, their only hope and home on the broad, magnificent "waters of the dark blue sea."

We had a bit of a toss in the Bay of Biscay, when most of the passengers betook themselves to their cabins, like so many rabbits disappearing into their burrows. On the third day the Canary Isles were reached, and skirting the island of Gomera, with Palma on our right, we sighted away to the eastward the peak of Teneriffe, as usual half hidden in a cloud. A few hours later, with a pretty stiff breeze blowing, we dropped anchor opposite Funchal, in the island of Madeira.

Of course there was a rush to go on shore, in spite of the rain, which came down in torrents. Many of us, anxious to obtain news of the war, lost no time in securing a boat, into which we transferred ourselves and were rowed towards the

land. On the beach the surf was breaking with tremendous power, and the excitement of landing was enhanced by the shouts of men, the screams of women and boys, all desirous of attracting attention to their wants long before we were through the surf, or in a fair way to be landed.

The boatmen in these parts show great skill in the management of their craft, bringing them in upon waves which, if they broke, would smash and overturn the strongest. As the boat nears the shore, and the breaker is about to burst, men rush forward from the beach and secure it with strong cords, to which are harnessed four powerful oxen, who at once drag the jeopardised boat high and dry on the beach.

Then arises around you a very babel of voices ; blind, halt, and lame clamour in your ear ; deformed objects exhibit to your horrified gaze their disgusting sores ; interpreters shout at you and assure you that you have engaged them, endeavouring all the time to entice you in different directions ; vendors of wares display their objects of interest, entreating you to buy ; while charioteers invite you to enter their exceedingly uncomfortable-looking conveyances.

As it was pouring with rain this offer appeared to me to be the least distasteful, so, taking refuge

in one of the hearse-like vehicles, and selecting from the crowd of guides one who appeared more cleanly and lower toned than the rest, I directed him to conduct us to the post-office. But I quickly discovered that it was a case of "from the frying-pan into the fire," for our crowd of tormentors continued to surround the slow lumbering conveyance which, minus wheels, and built on runners, bumped and jolted us unmercifully. There was very little news to be obtained in the town, our own ship having brought the latest and most authentic; so, despatching a telegram to England in search of what we required, we sought a welcome refuge in the cosy retreat of Reid's Hotel, out of reach of our many tormentors. In the afternoon we returned to the *Warwick Castle*, and at six o'clock the anchor was weighed and we were once more on our way.

Seventeen days at sea without sighting land is always dreary work to those who are not kindled with the enthusiasm of Cicero and Sir William Jones for a voyage of many thousands of miles in tropical seas.

Isaac Disraeli, in his *Literary Character*, says that "no situation is more common on a sea voyage, where nothing presents itself to the reflections of most men, than irksome observations

on the desert waters." It is reserved for the mind of genius alone, wrapped in meditation, to find delight in the surrounding scene ; but as everybody who travels by sea is not a genius, capable of that deep meditation which obliterates all surroundings, amusement of some sort has to be originated in order to pass the time and give pleasure to the lower order of minds !

This we contrived to accomplish ; and time flew quickly enough until, on Friday the 11th March, after coasting the greater part of the morning, Robben Island hove in sight, and with it that grand mass of flat-topped rock which towers at the back of Cape Town, and is dignified under the name of Table Mountain.

How eagerly we all pressed forward as the ship drew into dock, and anxiously awaited the news. Little we dreamed, in our British arrogance, of the words which a few minutes later fell with cruel distinctness on our listening ears :—"The British troops have been cut to pieces on the Majuba Mountain, and Sir George Colley is killed."

All over the ship a pin might have been heard to drop, so intense was the silence which followed this announcement. It was broken after a long and painful pause by whispered exclamations of horror and amazement, which gradually loudened

into the buzz of many tongues as every one began to discuss the bad news. We lost no time in landing ; and immediately, with Major Merriman, Captain Beresford, Mr. Hedley, and Mr. Ruck, took train for Wynberg, in the quiet outskirts of Cape Town, with the intention of there passing the night.

The bad news had greatly affected our spirits, and although an appearance of cheerfulness was maintained, we were all in anything but a gay mood.

For myself, the shock had been great. In the recent disastrous engagement several dear friends had fallen ; and wandering out alone after dinner, in the calm softness of the clear tropical night, it was hard to realise that the faces I had so lately seen, the voices I had so recently listened to, as they laughed a gay farewell, were departed for ever—cold, silent, and no more, in the grim clutches of Death.

CHAPTER II.

CAPE TOWN EXPERIENCES—VISIT TO THE ZULU KING—OFF
AGAIN—THE WILD MAN'S LAND—TRANSPORT LANDING
—A BLACK HOLE OF CALCUTTA.

AFTER an early breakfast the following morning we returned to Cape Town, where we spent several hours in shopping and sight-seeing. I was agreeably surprised in everything we came across, the ideas I had formed of Cape Town being not very grand. We walked up to Government House to write our names down, and were cordially and hospitably received by the courteous governor and his wife, who very kindly pressed us to take up our abode at the house during the remainder of our stay ; so, availing ourselves of their hospitality, we were not long in becoming their guests. The afternoon was spent in visiting several spots of great beauty outside Cape Town, and a delightful drive home in the cool of the evening brought to a conclusion a very pleasant and well-spent day.

In compliance with a wish I had expressed to pay a visit to King Cetshwayo, Sir Hercules Robinson had made every arrangement necessary for the interview, and it was settled that after lunch on the following day we should drive over to Oude Molen and call on the Zulu King. Several visitors turned up at the luncheon hour, amongst whom came Prince Louis of Battenberg. The Prince had ridden over from Simon's Bay, at which place the detached squadron was lying, and he informed us that every one was hoping that orders would arrive for them to proceed at once to Natal. As we since learnt, these hopes were not realised. Directly lunch was over we entered the carriage which was in waiting, and started for Oude Molen. A drive of six or seven miles for the most part along the sea coast carried us through a dreary and uninviting-looking country, until, bearing suddenly to the right, we passed through some gates, and followed along a deep sandy road which led to the residence of the King. Driving across a broad sandy plain resembling somewhat an English common, we suddenly came in sight of a staring whitewashed house, which was pointed out to me as Oude Molen. The King, who had been made aware of Lady Robinson's visit, came to the door to meet

us, and shook hands with every one. He appeared glad to receive visitors, laughed heartily at several remarks we made with a view of amusing him, and in his turn chuckled over some jokes of his own making. In repose, however, his features assumed a sad and careworn expression; and it was easy to trace, in the pleasing, kindly countenance of this unfortunate man, the secret trouble which is gnawing at his heart, and embittering his daily existence.

An instance of grosser injustice can be nowhere recorded than the detention of this brave but unhappy captive, who is suffering for the ambition and cupidity of others, and whose sole crime was his defence of his invaded country, when he turned his arms against the invaders, with whom he earnestly and honestly desired to live in peace. In the dignity, patience, and fortitude under severe trial with which he bears his captivity, Cetshwayo has shown that he lacks not that which is found wanting in the breasts of his conquerors, *i.e.* generosity and nobility of soul, which it would be well for justice-loving (!) John Bull to imitate.

On hearing that I was on my way to Natal and the Transvaal, Cetshwayo expressed great interest, and in a few minutes' private conversa-

tion which I snatched with him afterwards he begged me to visit Zululand, and his wrecked capital, news of which he said it would make him happy to receive. I promised him that if possible I would do so; and having paid a visit to the four girls of the kraal who share with him his captivity, we prepared to take our departure.

I was not particularly prepossessed by the exterior view of Oude Molen, and I must confess the interior seemed to me still worse. The place is totally devoid of any kind of furniture or pictures, whereby this dingy residence could in a way be rendered cheerful and habitable. Bare is the little entrance hall or vestibule into which the visitor is first introduced,—barer still is the room in which Cetshwayo lives; and the only objects which strike the eye on entering are a few roughly manufactured kitchen chairs! In a dark dreary room at the back of the house dwell the partners of his misery. These poor creatures were very pleased to see us, and we left them happy in the possession of a few shillings and half-crowns with which we had purchased the fruits of their industry in the shape of some neatly constructed bead necklaces.

The following morning, the s.s. *Melrose* being ready to depart for Natal, we bade good-bye to

our hospitable host and hostess, and went on board. Just as we were leaving dock I received from Sir Hercules Robinson the news of the assassination of the Emperor of Russia, together with information of the further prolongation of the armistice. This last news was received by every one with great satisfaction, as it held out a hope of reaching Natal before hostilities recommenced; the possibility of a settled peace being arranged being of course quite out of the question—at least so it was generally thought.

So away we steamed, and soon Cape Town faded far astern, while distant ranges of mountains rose hazily visible on the port side of the vessel. A good deal of coasting work was done until the following day, when the *Melrose* cast anchor in Mossel Bay, and awaited the arrival of a boat put out from shore to take the mails. The water all around appeared alive with sharks, upon which every one set about trying in various fashions to catch one of these monsters. Tempting pieces of raw meat spitted on to huge hooks were hung over the ship's sides, but all to no effect, and the baits remained untouched. Rifles were got out from their cases, but though many a bullet ploughed the water on apparently the very spot where the great fish showed themselves, this

method of securing them was equally unsuccessful. The mails for Mossel Bay having been shipped, we coasted on to Port Elizabeth or Algoa Bay. At this place several of our party went on shore, but they did so at a great risk of being left behind. For myself, I did not follow their example, the general distant appearance of the town not being particularly inviting. In the distance the island of Ste. Croix could be distinguished, this being the first land discovered by B. Diaz in 1486, after rounding the Cape.

We made our last stoppage before reaching Natal at East London on the following day. This seaport town, formerly Fort Glamorgan, is built at the mouth of the Buffalo River, being over seven hundred miles distant from Cape Town. It was blowing heavily as we cast anchor in the open and exposed bay, the ship rolling her gunwales nearly under water as the tremendous seas tossed her unmercifully here and there. The greatest difficulty was experienced in shipping the cargo, and several of the passengers ran narrow escapes during their transportation from the steam-tug to the *Melrose*. It was not until many hours of discomfort had been undergone, during which period it was difficult for the most experienced sailor to gain a secure footing, that

the vessel was set once more in motion, and her head at last pointed for fair Natal.

During the whole of the following day the coast line of Kaffraria, rocky and dangerous, continued to unfold its rough and rugged scenery to our delighted view. By the great Kei River dwell the tribes of the Amagalecka Kaffirs, while that portion of the country bordering on Natal is inhabited by the Amapondos. Many of this latter tribe are a wild and untamed race, owing allegiance to no one but their chiefs, although the greater part of Kaffraria, or, as it is now more properly called, the Transkeian territories, is fully under British authority.

Through powerful glasses we could distinguish large herds of cattle, the property of these peaceful and pastoral people, quietly grazing on the slopes of Griqualand East; while in many instances the natives themselves were plainly visible at work in their mealie gardens or tending their herds.

Early on Saturday morning, the 19th March, the *Melrose* cast anchor outside the bar at Durban. A tremendous swell was rolling, and the bar itself was in such a state of agitation and turmoil that the captain of our vessel declared it impossible to take the ship into harbour until the weather should calm down.

This information was received by us with anything but satisfaction, our impatience to get on shore being in no way allayed by such unwelcome news. We were, however, forced to content ourselves with the promise that in a couple of hours the company's steam tug would be alongside, when any passengers feeling inclined to trust to the tender mercies of the bar were at liberty to avail themselves of this opportunity to get on shore, the captain assuring us that as soon as it was practicable he would lose no time in bringing his ship in for the purpose of landing our luggage.

A great many ships of all kinds and nationalities were rolling at anchor in the bay. A couple of transport vessels were busily employed in their hazardous work of landing men and horses, the latter business being especially trying, and I should imagine uncomfortable, to the unfortunate animals, some of whom remained swinging in the air for over ten minutes at a time. To lower a horse from the deck of a transport ship to the lighter below in a heavy swell is by no means an easy task, and the wretched animal,—dangling mid-air at the end of a pulley, his feet at one moment almost touching the sea, at another his body on a line with the topmost mast,—presents

indeed a pitiable object. I had ample time to watch these proceedings while awaiting the tug which was to convey us on shore, the unpleasant feeling experienced in observing the struggles of the poor beasts being pleasantly obliterated in the amusing spectacle presented by the transportation of the men from the ship to the lighters. By the aid of rope-ladders and cords depending from the ship's side the men slung themselves downwards, and sprang into the lighter whenever a convenient opportunity presented itself, in the sudden uprising of a huge wave, which brought the craft on a level with themselves. Those who could not rely so much on their ape-like powers were lowered by pulley in the same manner as the horses; a serious accident in this way very nearly taking place, which might have proved disastrous but happily did not. One of the officers of this regiment, which turned out to be that of the 14th Hussars from India, while in the act of being lowered, was let down at the wrong moment, and at once disappeared between the lighter and the ship. It was a very narrow shave, but fortunately; as luck would have it on this occasion, a friendly and interposing wave intervened to separate the ship and the lighter. Had it been otherwise the unfortunate officer

must have been smashed as flat as a pancake. As it was he escaped unhurt, but having descended with a somewhat rosy complexion, he was drawn up with an exceedingly pallid one, doubtless caused by the reflection of his own fears.

At length, after long and patient waiting, the promised steam-tug made its appearance. We caught sight of it making its way through the rough and angry waters of the bar, often so enveloped in spray that it was impossible to distinguish it. We lost no time as soon as it came alongside the vessel in transferring ourselves to its wet and slippery decks, which we had no sooner reached than we were instructed to go below. This meant descending into a pestilential hole, which was already crammed with second and third class passengers, who so entirely filled up the space that there was barely standing room. It was in vain that we remonstrated, and begged to be allowed to remain on deck. We were informed this was quite out of the question, and consequently, but very unwillingly, we staggered below, and the hatch being immediately closed we found ourselves battened down in total darkness. I have often heard of the Black Hole in Calcutta, and terrible as that place may have been, I should imagine that the hole in which we were

confined could have proved a worthy rival. Seldom have I experienced such disagreeable moments. Crowded to suffocation, children crying, women screaming, and every one more or less most inconveniently selecting this very time in which to be sick, added to the whistling of the wind, and the heavy thud of the breakers against the ship's side as it made its way across the bar, produced a confused din which sounded much—as one of our party frankly remarked—"like hell let loose." The smell was intolerable, and I shall never forget those delightful moments when the hatch was at length pushed back, and we were informed we could come on deck. Up we rushed into the pure fresh air with long-drawn exclamations of thankfulness,—truly one has to suffer before learning how to enjoy.

On landing we put up at the Alexandra Hotel, close to the point where we had come on shore, and impatiently awaited the arrival of the *Melrose*. But disappointment was again in store, for, later in the day, in attempting to cross the bar, the vessel got stranded on a sandbank; and though the company worked hard to get her off, the close of evening saw her in the same unfortunate position.

All that afternoon the horses and men of the

14th Hussars were being landed on the quay, and we spent some time watching that interesting operation. The horses, most of them Whalers and Persians, appeared in excellent condition, not a bit the worse for all their knocking about; and the entire force was eventually landed without a loss or a casualty, with the exception of one poor beast who broke his leg, and was immediately shot.

By dint of sheer force employed the *Melrose* was tugged off the bar next day, but it was not till evening that we managed to get our luggage collected and passed through the Custom House. That afternoon we visited the 14th Hussars, by whom we were most hospitably entertained in their charming camp, pitched on the wooded slopes of the Berea, and thence wandered about Durban, making acquaintance with the pretty town nestling in its oceans of green. Of this place my first impressions were most agreeable, and I was greatly touched by the extreme courtesy and kindness which I received from many of its inhabitants to whom I was a total stranger. Altogether my recollections of Durban are completely associated with all that was pleasant and delightful, and it was a time to which I look back with great pleasure.

CHAPTER III.

FORMING A STUD—AN UNENVIABLE EXISTENCE—PLAYED OUT
—USEFUL ALLIES—A PAINFUL SCENE—AQUATIC OXEN
—NATIONAL GLOOM—ROUGH EXPERIENCES.

ON Monday, the 21st of March, we left Durban by an early train for Pieter Maritzburg, which was reached at two o'clock. No sooner had we arrived than I set to work to discover and purchase horses, a by no means easy task as it proved, these useful animals being an exceedingly scarce article, not to mention ruinously dear. It being, however, a case of "pay up or have naught," there was nothing for it but to cheerfully acquiesce in a matter of necessity, and after a timely jingle of coin, and evincing stoical willingness to be cheated, the quadrupeds made their appearance one by one, and by noon on the following day a fairly good-looking stud had been collected, to whose powers it was proposed to entrust a quick ride to Newcastle, distant some two hundred miles.

We were a gay and cheery party as we galloped that morning through the town of Pieter Maritzburg. Many a head was turned with a glance of curiosity towards our little band. Whatever they thought became soon a matter for future digestion, for a few minutes saw us on the outskirts of the town, and our horses' heads fairly pointed towards the north. Howick, distant some twelve or fourteen miles, was speedily reached. This place can boast of falls which, for beauty, size, and magnificence, far outrival the Cataracts of Niagara, and the spray which rises aloft envelopes the air for many feet in height in a dense thick mist.

Comfortable quarters awaited us at Curry's Post, which we were not sorry to reach. One of the recent purchases, for which I had given £50, turned out to be but a wretched jade. I had been obliged to buy him at the last moment for want of a better, and he had become the mount of my servant, who found the greatest difficulty in getting him along. I was glad to dispose of him for £3 to a farmer, who promised to give him a comfortable home and a fair chance to recover! I thought myself fortunate in being able to buy at this place a couple of horses for £100; and these purchases, with which I never

parted during my stay in South Africa, proved most useful and enduring, and in time of need never failed me.

We pressed on for Mooi River that night, distant from Pieter Maritzburg some forty-five miles. All along the way we passed innumerable ox waggons proceeding to the front, and heavily laden with stores. The roads, which had not then recovered from the heavy rains, were in a terrible state, the deep heavy sand and treacherous holes proving formidable obstacles to encounter and overcome. As we rode along we came across many waggons hopelessly stuck; some were completely overturned, while here and there a total breakdown added to the confusion and disaster of the scene. Double spans of oxen struggled wildly and vainly to extricate their foundering waggons; but even with the aid of spade and pick all their efforts proved fruitless, and the weary and laborious task of unloading was in the end the general result. In every direction the eye was attracted by the painful spectacle of dead and dying oxen, over whom hovered large flocks of the disgusting *Asvögel* or vulture, to whose friendly offices nevertheless the country is indebted for its freedom from pestilence and disease, which would inevitably

result were it not for the wide-spread services of these useful scavengers.

The life of a trek ox in these parts (especially a Government one, or in the service of the Government) is by no means an enviable position; and his fat sleek brethren in England, who spend their days in luxury and ease in preparation for the butcher's knife, would scarcely change places even if they could be made aware of their impending fate. A truly pitiable and repulsive sight it is to see a heavily loaded waggon being dragged along. The poor brutes yoked therein strain their patient necks and strive hard against unequal odds, goaded along the while by the demon-like shouts and horrid cries of their black drivers. As the name of each ox is pronounced the stranger can at once single him out by the trembling quiver that passes over the poor beast's frame. Whirr, crack, whack! comes the merciless double-thonged lash across his body, while a huge wale rises; more often a ghastly fleshy wound is left from which the red blood slowly trickles, testifying to the severity of his punishment.

In winter time their fate is especially hard, for the dry withered grass affords scant nourishment, while the cold piercing winds that sweep over

the Veldt strike home with fatal force through their thin and bony carcasses. Day by day they grow weaker and weaker, until the cruel yoke becomes for them a thing of the past ; and, forsaken by their owners, they wander forth o'er the cold bleak Veldt to die.

During my progress up country sights of this description were very frequent, and though I was assured that a few months', even a few weeks', sojourn in South Africa would speedily accustom me to view these scenes of suffering with indifference, I must confess this prediction was in no way verified.

How delighted we were to reach Moqi River, in spite of the poor accommodation which the little wayside inn could offer. The horses had borne the journey fairly well, considering the soft condition they were in ; but the poor brutes must have felt as thankful at the sight of the stable as we were on beholding the hotel.

Our rest all night long was greatly disturbed by the nocturnal attacks of a little visitor who shall be nameless ! For myself, I preferred to find what repose I could in a wooden chair, in which I ensconced myself, and, with my head resting on the table, soon fell asleep ; but my companions, unable to resist the temptation of a

bed and sheets, were tortured and tormented unceasingly in their restless vigils, and had every reason to envy the profound and refreshing sleep in which I indulged ! As with the dull gray dawn of early morning they sank into exhausted slumber, I awoke. It was very cold, and I felt stiff and benumbed with the hardness of my couch ; but with awaking consciousness the recollection dawned upon me that we had agreed overnight to make an early start, in order to avail ourselves of the cool hours of morning to get well along on our journey, halting during the midday heat to rest and refresh the horses. Hastily indulging in a species of cold splash, which was decidedly wintry, I groped my way to the stables and with difficulty aroused my sleepy servant and still more drowsy Kaffirs. Soon the horses were indulging in a liberal supply of oat hay, which they greatly appreciated, and having seen that the wants of these, our most faithful servants, had been properly attended to, I went back to the inn and to the fresh task of awaking my slumbering companions. But my efforts for a long time were unsuccessful, and the only replies I received to all my tapping and knocking at the doors of their rooms were suppressed groans and grunts and long-drawn

yawns. Fortunately, however, this restlessness had the effect of disturbing their recent enemies, who on this occasion proved to me most valuable allies. Renewing their attack on the bodies of their victims, these little creatures achieved a signal victory, and quickly succeeded in banishing the sluggards from their positions of sloth. A ride of eighteen miles brought us to Estcourt, where we halted for breakfast. At this place a company of the 97th Regiment and a small force of Natal Mounted Police were stationed, whose duty it was to search up-country waggons and intercept all passage of arms by Boer agents. This occupation was very little relished, and the desire to get up to the front freely expressed.

The heat was excessive, and the tempting proximity of Bushmans River made every one long for a plunge. While breakfast was preparing my companions sallied forth armed with towels, while I was forced but glad to content myself with the luxury of a cold tub, which the resources of the hotel were found to afford. When we were all assembled at breakfast a telegram was placed in my hands, and upon opening it I found it to contain an announcement from headquarters acquainting me with the signature of peace which had taken place at O'Neill's Farm

beneath the Amajuba. I will pass over what followed this announcement, or all we said and thought on this occasion. To describe it would be but a repetition of all that has been said on this subject before. Suffice to say we echoed the voices of condemning millions, and blushed for the shame and dishonour which had fallen on that country to which he who soon followed her disgrace to the grave brought "peace with honour."

Heart-sick and disgusted we continued our journey ; we felt in no mood for conversation, and the next twenty-two miles was performed in silence. At Colenso, halting for an hour, we came across Colonel Wavell and Major Morris proceeding down country, and to them confirmed the disgraceful news, which we found no one willing to believe or credit. Had a book been compiled containing all the epithets and abuse hurled at the Government who had so debased and lowered the glory and prestige of England, during the six months I passed in South Africa, I verily believe that the volume in question would have been great,—beyond all power of the human frame to lift.

The temper we were all in did not improve the pleasure of a further ride of twenty miles on

tired horses ; and to make matters worse, when we eventually drew near to Ladysmith we found the Klip River so rapid and swollen that to ford it was impossible. True there was a floating pont, but that, for the time being, we found engaged in transferring to the other side a mule waggon and its team. So, dismounting from our stiff and weary horses, we loosened the girths of their saddles and allowed them to wander about in search of food. It was fortunate we did so, as we were kept waiting a long time for the pont, on which the waggon was hopelessly stuck. In trying to run the vehicle on to the land, one of the fore wheels had sunk into a mud hole. Thus the front portion of the waggon rested on the land, while the hinder part remained on the pont. The road leading from the landing stage rose abruptly in a steep, almost perpendicular incline, and the mules, although they tried hard at first, found it impossible to extricate the waggon from its hopeless position. Their struggling efforts proving fruitless and ineffectual, the tired animals appeared to lose all hope or confidence in their own powers, and steadfastly and wisely refused to renew their attempts. Then ensued a scene truly repulsive and disgusting. Double-thonging his whip, the driver brought the lash down in

quick succession across the backs of the poor beasts, carrying away long streaks of flesh in the operation, while the conductor beat them unmercifully about the legs, head, and mouth, with a knobkerrie which he carried in his hand. Several soldiers in charge of the waggon, instead of interposing to prevent such cruelty, seemed to look upon it as an amusing spectacle, and one of them, drawing his knife, began to prog one of the animals with the blade. In its agony the poor brute reared up and fell backwards, while the rest, in their fright and terror, became inextricably mixed in each other's gear ; it was not until most of them, foaming and panting and covered with blood, lay helplessly stretched out on the ground, that the order was finally given to desist, and the men proceeded to unload the waggon and release and reharness the fallen mules. The scene I have described is in no way exaggerated, and I consider it to have been the most grossly cruel and degrading spectacle I have ever witnessed. Animals were given to man for use, and not abuse ; and the sooner a civilized community attend to this distinction the better. While awaiting the return of the pont I occupied myself in watching the progress of two or three hundred oxen who were being "swum," across the

Klip some fifty yards down stream. These great animals took quite kindly to the water, and did not seem in the least degree terrified by the tremendous current that was running. The moment they entered the river nothing could be distinguished but a mass of horns and black snouts appearing on the surface, presenting every appearance of drowning. In this manner they reached the opposite bank in safety, emerging like huge hippopotami from their watery refuge. In due time we were all landed on the Ladysmith side of the river, and thought ourselves in paradise as we rode along its tree-lined streets to the hotel. A few days' contemplation of the great rolling Veldt, especially in winter time, makes the sight of green foliage and vegetation of any kind or sort doubly refreshing and welcome; and it was with a sigh of satisfaction that we felt that for a short time at least we had entered upon a new world. At the Crown Hotel we found good accommodation; the wants of our horses were quickly attended to. If it is your desire to travel long distances day after day on the same horse, it is absolutely necessary to pay the strictest attention to the comfort and wellbeing of the animal. The colonial steed is, without exception, the most enduring of his kind that I have ever

come across, and I have on several occasions accomplished a journey of ninety or a hundred miles in little more than a day on the same animal. But to do this you must humour the requirements of your horse. His wants are very simple, and he requires but little, and this little is very easily supplied. At the commencement of a journey a halt should be called at the expiration of the first half hour, when, having removed the saddle, the horse should be turned loose to graze and roll, and find what water he requires. Twenty minutes is ample time to allow, when the journey can be resumed, and continued for three or four hours. A second halt for an hour is then advisable, and if the opportunity presents itself of giving him a feed of oat hay, this opportunity should not be neglected. Failing the possibility of procuring forage, the horse will content himself with a graze on the Veldt and a drink of as much water as he requires.

It is the night's rest which is so imperatively necessary to the colonial horse, without which he will soon waste away. Give him his night's rest and plenty to eat at the same time, and in the morning when you require him you will find a clean manger and a refreshed and invigorated animal. His back is supposed to be a somewhat

tender point. In this I do not agree, as the back of any horse will become swollen and sore if the saddle is not rightly attended to. It is, of course, necessary to see that this is properly stuffed and cleaned; and if this practice is adhered to, and the rider sits straight in his saddle, I do not think a sore back would ever be complained of.

A remnant of the 58th, who received such a terrible slating in the attack on Lange's Nek, was quartered at Ladysmith at the time of our arrival. In the evening we strolled up the picturesque street of the little town, listening to the band of this regiment, which was performing in a large open space or square close to the Saw Works. Public excitement was at its pitch, and the fate of any Boer found lurking in the town would have been unenviable. The action of her Majesty's Government was universally condemned, and the choice expressions of hatred and disgust, connected with the names of Mr. Gladstone and Lord Kimberley, found vent in language the reverse of polite. Shame was on every face and in every heart, and the universal gloom both painful and depressing.

We remained at Ladysmith a day to rest the horses, starting early the following morning, and breakfasting at Sunday's River, some twenty-four

miles on the road. We here came across several officers on their way down country for England, and somehow or other so dawdled away the day that it was growing dusk when we mounted our horses once more and set out for the Biggarsberg, distant some thirteen miles. It would have been wiser to have stuck to our present quarters, considering the lateness of the hour; and we regretted still more having left Sunday's River, when a crash of thunder, followed by large drops of rain, warned us of the quick approach of a storm. Large masses of black clouds obscured the moon, and we found the greatest difficulty in keeping the road, owing to the dense blackness of the night and the inclination of the horses to wander over the Veldt in search of shelter. I was leading a little in advance of my companions, and had for the moment given my horse his head, when I was disagreeably reminded that even these sagacious animals are liable to make a mistake, for with a sudden floundering movement he toed the ground over a high ant-heap and came down with a heavy crash into a deep gully or pit. By this time the rain was coming down in torrents, and the place into which we had rolled was a perfect quagmire of mud. "Soft falling, at any rate," said I to myself, "but oh! how dirty;"

and with this feeble attempt at jocularly, proceeded to pick my way out of the slimy trap. By dint of shouting I made out the direction taken by the others, and a brilliant flash of lightning disclosed them to me some hundred yards ahead. The crash of thunder which followed the flash of lightning made my horse tremble with terror, and it may be imagined with what joy I perceived the glimmer of a distant light. Refuge was at hand, and a few minutes later saw us, drenched and miserable, unloading our packs and removing our saddles outside the dreary little half-way house of Carey's Rest. We thought ourselves fortunate, however, in procuring food and stabling for the horses, though the accommodation which awaited ourselves was of the poorest and dirtiest. Food was scarce and very bad, while the house was infested by the same species of unpleasant occupants that had annoyed us so much at Mooi River. Cold, drenched, and hungry, we spent a most unpleasant night.

CHAPTER IV.

PASSAGE OF THE BIGGARSBERG—WOUNDED SOLDIERS—OUR
FIRST DINNER AT FORT AMIEL—A CROSS COUNTRY RIDE
—A FACER—THE INGOGO BATTLEFIELD—A GALLANT ACT.

WE left Carey's Post by dawn of day, and in the passage of the Biggarsberg Range entered upon totally different scenery from that through which we had hitherto passed. The road we followed led through a hilly, rocky country, the steep, precipitous, and frowning crags of those giant heights appearing to defy the encroachments and assaults of man. Passing through a valley of wild and strange beauty, we found ourselves on the summit of the mountain pass, and looked down upon a far-stretching country, a vast rolling plain extending far away to the blue line of the Drakensberg. On regaining the Veldt we pushed along at a brisk pace, in the hope of reaching Newcastle early that afternoon, the pleasure of meeting friends whom we longed to see stimulating us to increased energy. At the Ingagane River we made a short

stay for breakfast, after which we visited a small camp on the other side of the river, where we found the soldiers busily employed in erecting forts. The officer in command came out to meet us, bringing with him a fresh mount for myself, which the kindness and forethought of Sir Evelyn Wood's aide-de-camp had provided. All along the road between the Ingagane River and Newcastle, ambulances filled with wounded soldiers kept passing us; the greater part of the men wore their left arms in slings, a curious incident illustrative of the unerring aim of the Boers. The most convalescent trudged along the road on foot, probably preferring this manner of travelling to the joltings of the slow creaking ox waggon in which their companions were laid. Most of these poor fellows looked ghastly, and signs of suffering had furrowed themselves deep into the faces of many; while a depressed look pervaded every countenance, hardly as yet recovered from the startling conviction that must have forced itself upon every one, that by the recent act of the Government all this suffering had indeed been borne in vain.

In the distance a cloud of dust had for some time attracted our attention. It had every appearance of coming our way, and we strained our eyes

to try and distinguish its cause. I was able to make out the figures of two horsemen galloping along, each leading a spare animal, and as we continued to watch the advancing party a faint cheer came floating to our ears. With a shout of welcome we dashed forward, and were soon in the midst of a general hand-shaking and the inevitable "How are you, old fellow?" an expression so characteristic of the great John Bull tribe when friends meet.

Our new companions who had just joined us turned out to be Captain Maude, aide-de-camp to Sir Evelyn Wood, and Captain Douglas of the 15th Hussars, a cousin of myself. They had ridden out from Newcastle only with a faint hope of meeting us, hardly expecting that under the present circumstances of peace we would have pushed along so quickly. However, here we were; the *rencontre* had been both pleasant and fortunate, and we rode along in the highest spirits, with which the reaction of the moment inspired us. At last Newcastle hove in sight, and away to the left of the town we could make out the white tents on Fort Amiel dotted about amidst the stone-erected hospitals and commissariat offices. I was disappointed with Newcastle; its name was decidedly grander than its personal

appearance. A few straggling houses, chiefly temporarily-erected ones of tin, were all that met the eye, the most important being those of the Post-office and Court-house, in one, two or three large stores, and the Masonic Hotel. The tin buildings enjoyed a precarious existence, as did likewise several delicate-looking constructions of wood and canvas, that had a hard fight for it with the strong winds which at this time of year swept down from the Drakensberg with tremendous force. I have frequently seen the former, completely taken off their legs, utterly collapse ; while the latter, blown to shreds, flapped their disconsolate remnants of canvas against the skeletons of their former selves.

We dined that night at Fort Amiel with Sir Evelyn Wood and his staff, and spent a very merry evening. A great deal of chaff was carried on between Colonel Buller and Major Fraser ; the latter, whose hand was bound up, and who was suffering from a wound received in the Majuba affair, aggravated by a fall from his horse sustained that morning, I am inclined to think getting the worst of it. For several days following our arrival we were very busily employed. Most of the regiments had been moved away from headquarters on account of the scarcity of grass, and

were encamped three or four miles distant on the other side of some high rising ground called Signal Hill. Thither we likewise repaired, pitching our tents close to that of the 15th Hussars, which camp overlooked those of the Inniskillings, Artillery, 3-60th, 92d Highlanders, and the 94th and 97th Regiments, extended in semicircle order in the valley below. The distant view was beautiful. Far away stretched an undulating country, watered by many streams, the winding course of the Buffalo glinting and gleaming beneath the rays of the sun, and flashing back the glory which its silver water received and mirrored. Sleepily and lazily arose the blue curling smoke of many grass fires, telling where the sable sons of Afric had passed along; and beyond all, above the fair scene which it enclosed, rose the mighty chain of the Drakensberg, fit rampart brought by nature to defy the inventions and power of man. There, amidst the many fantastically-shaped mountains, one, strangely-formed, square-topped hill arose,—one to which the gaze was often turned with lingering pain and mourning,—one the sight of which awoke strange memories and regrets,—whose shadows wrap the distant graves of soldiers, whose heights cradle the bones of sleeping warriors: for Queen and country they fought and

fell on the slopes of the Amajuba. An expedition had been planned and arranged amongst ourselves to visit these scenes connected with the late war, which we calculated would occupy us several days. Our party was to consist, besides our two selves, of Captain Douglas, Captain Sullivan, and Mr. Manners, all of the 15th Hussars, and Captain Maude eventually joined us on obtaining leave from his duties as aide-de-camp, in consequence of the approaching departure of Sir Evelyn Wood for Pretoria, the General taking with him only one servant.

Our baggage and pack-horses having been sent on ahead of us in the charge of our servants to the Ingogo River, we made a start from camp soon after lunch, and, disdaining the more circuitous but surer route following the waggon road, we immediately struck across country in the direction of Mount Prospect. It was a glorious day: the heat of the sun was tempered by the fresh and exhilarating air, and we were all of us in the highest spirits. One might have been back in Leicestershire listening to the view-holloa by the covert side, and a hundred foxes might have been supposed to be going away, judging from the manner in which these holloas were taken up and repeated, as we galloped away across the

Veldt totally regardless of the deep and treacherous ant-bear holes, or of our own necks, which we thus placed in jeopardy. Out from the long grass sprang the tiny steenbuck, a little antelope not much bigger than a large-sized hare, were it not for the long delicately tapered legs on which the body is set ; the partridges scudded away, and the startled corān rose with hoarse cackle, somewhat resembling an old cock grouse. Gracefully the wild Mahaan and stately Kaffir crane winged their slow flight towards the distant gleaming waters of the Buffalo, while even the audacious magpie crow, whose serenity is seldom disturbed, cawed a loud protest against the invaders of his peaceful retreat.

Galloping in this wild manner, our party got somewhat separated from each other, and when at length I drew rein, I could see none of my companions, with the exception of my cousin, whom I could distinguish riding through some high reeds not far off. Before long a deep and treacherous-looking gully barred all farther progress, so we turned our horses' heads towards each other and rode along the sides, attentively examining every cranny and crevice therein, in the hope of coming across a convenient spot for crossing. But we joined each other without being successful ; and

as the gully was too broad to jump,—too boggy, and in some places too deep, to ford,—we found ourselves nonplussed and perplexed on all sides.

“Here’s a facer,” exclaimed my cousin as he rode up; “how on earth are we going to manage this place without swimming it? The water’s quite over the horses’ ears; of that I’m certain.”

“Well, it will have to be done somehow or other,” said I; “so we had better ride along a bit in the direction you have just come, and see if we can’t find a drift or some place a little less impracticable than this.”

Turning our horses’ heads, we rode along to the northward and followed the course of the gully, which, instead of improving, appeared at every moment to grow more and more forbidding. We had almost begun to despair of success, and were making up our minds for a wetting, when, on rounding a projecting hill, we suddenly came in sight of the rest of the party, who, like us, were on the wrong side of the gully. They were standing still, and appeared to be examining something, and on galloping up we found it was a crevice, uninviting-looking enough, yet still down which a horse might possibly be induced to go, if he could only succeed in scrambling up the steep and slippery bank on the opposite side. There was no help

for it but to entrust our fortunes to the venture; and regretting, now that it was too late, that we had not followed the road, we prepared to make the attempt. Volunteering to become our pioneer, my cousin with a great deal of slipping and sliding managed to get his horse down the crevice and into the water. Immediately the animal sank up to his knees in mud, which resulted in a great deal of floundering and struggling, until, the centre of the stream being reached, the water became much deeper and he was forced to swim. A few strokes, however, landed him safely on the opposite bank, where, with a repetition of the floundering and plunging, he eventually gained the upper ground unhurt. One by one we followed his example, and thought ourselves truly fortunate, when the last dragged, mud-stained member of our party joined us, in having escaped, so cheaply with only a wetting.

Our next difficulty was to find the way. We were in total ignorance of our whereabouts, and every one had a different opinion as to the direction which should be pursued. A good deal of argument ensued, which resulted in no one being convinced as to the error of his ideas, and it was purely a stroke of good luck when our wanderings brought us out on to the battlefield of

the Ingogo, and close to the road leading down to the river of that name. We could no longer be in doubt as to our whereabouts, for the carcasses of mules and horses lay strewn in all directions, and the sickening smell of putrefying flesh testified to the large numbers that had fallen. As I rode over the battlefield I startled, in their horrible feast, the disgusting denizens of these scenes. Vultures and crows were perched about on the rocks hard by, revelling in the smell of the decaying carcasses, and enjoying the scene of death and desolation spread out on all sides. Behind a line of low rocks facing the road, little piles of empty cartridges showed where our men had endeavoured to make a stand against the scathing fire of the Boers, whose bullets had left their mark on many a sheltering stone. Here the struggle for mastery must have been hotly disputed ere our men commenced their slow retreat on the Ingogo. The hot fire directed against the artillery showed its results plainly enough in the close proximity to each other of many of the fallen animals. Poor brutes! they must have been shot down one after the other in quick succession, dying as they fell, the innocent victims of the passions and disputes of man. Following the gradual slope which extends from the battlefield to the river, it

becomes to the eyewitness a matter of congratulation that the Boers did not persist in their attack. Believing as they did that the swollen state of the river would prevent our escape, they desisted with the shades of evening from any further fighting, with the intention of following up their success the next day. In this they were disappointed, for under cover of darkness the feat of getting his men safely across was accomplished by Sir George Colley—a feat which only those who are acquainted with the danger attendant on crossing a rapidly rising South African river can fully appreciate, and realise the magnitude of the undertaking. Not only once but twice it has to be crossed, the road running through the drift shaping its course for another arm of the river, and it was here that one whose act was heroic perished in his endeavour to bring relief and comfort to the wounded and the dying. I refer to Lieut. Wilkinson. This gallant officer plunged his horse into the rushing torrent and endeavoured to gain the opposite bank. It was safely reached by the animal, but Lieut. Wilkinson was carried down stream, and being dashed against a rock lost his life. It was not until many days later that the body of the unfortunate man was recovered. Will the memory of this heroic act

be allowed to grow dim, and forgetfulness o'er-shadow the hearts of those for whom he died? Many lie beneath the ground on the Ingogo battlefield, but of those who remain let it not be said they have forgotten him ; or that the country in whose service he died ceases to remember that gallant act.

Having crossed both streams, which were at this time of year quite shallow, we halted for a few minutes' refreshment at the hotel of Mr. Firmeston, not a hundred yards from the Ingogo, after which we continued on our way, reaching Smith's Hotel after a further ride of half an hour. It was a poky, miserable little place, with few resources. Food was decidedly scarce, and had it not been for the timely arrival of some mutton and bread from the camp of the 2-60th at Mount Prospect, we should have been obliged to seek our couches dinnerless. Talking of couches, the whole place could only produce one cramped little bedroom, which was made over to me, but politely declined. Nor could I endure the stuffiness of the house itself, and managed in consequence to fabricate, out of the pack-saddles and other gear strewn outside in the porch or verandah, a very cosy bed. My companions sat up late that night playing cards. Awaking once

about one o'clock, I with difficulty recalled my whereabouts, but the cold night air soon brought recollection, and the clear moon burned overhead; its pure soft flame reminding me of days gone by, when, in lands far removed from this, I had nightly sought my couch under the starry vault, on Patagonian soil or amidst the warm snug jungles of the Uruguay. Thinking on those distant scenes I fell fast asleep.

.. CHAPTER V.

THE GREAT GOD SUN—COLOSSAL DREAMS—A GENERAL IN
JEOPARDY—LANGE'S NEK—THE ASCENT OF THE AMAJUBA
—UNFORTUNATE BUT BRAVE—HUNGRY AS HUNTERS—
FEASTING AND PLEASURE.

GRAY and misty broke the dawn of day as I opened my eyes and peered out from under the blanket that covered me. Oh! how cold it was, and the dew lay heavily on everything around. Not a soul was stirring in or around the house; the majesty of silence reigned; and with a tremendous shiver I drew back into my shell and cuddled beneath the blanket. It was no easy matter to get warm again, and as for renewed sleep, my efforts proved quite ineffectual in that direction; so, resigning myself to the inevitable, I endeavoured to await patiently the arrival of the sun. He came at last, rising like a great ball of fire behind the distant hills. First a trembling, golden atmosphere gave warning of his approach, and then the earth grew softly tinted with purple shades, which changed to the brilliant colours of

the rainbow as they danced in gladsome joy on all around. Fancy could conjure them into many varied forms, and I found myself weaving imaginary scenes and visions from these heralds of the approaching king of day. Then a warm light of intense brightness flooded the whole scene, and the glory of all other lights waned and paled and vanished in the all-absorbing magnificence of the rising sun.

After this a hideous-looking biped of the fowl species came and crowed in my ear, startling me nearly into fits and banishing all meditation and repose. Probably he had been allowed to live in order to perform the function of Rouser-in-Chief to the establishment, for with the sound of his shrill voice there appeared on the scene two shivering Kaffirs, who disappeared in different directions, doubtless in search of their separate duties. Following them, after a short interval, came the two soldier-servants of Captain Sullivan and my cousin, who at once set to work cleaning the saddles and bridles belonging to their masters. Unseen, from beneath my blanket, I watched the operations with much interest, and profited not a little in the lesson I learnt thereby as to how to clean and burnish steel and brighten up the leather of the saddle. I was also a good

deal amused in listening to their conversation ; it chiefly related to the much-longed-for period when they should find themselves in England after an absence of nearly twelve years ; while the bright visions and elaborate plans of Evelyn, my cousin's servant, were only out rivalled by the colossal dreams of the other man !

The saddles and bridles having been cleaned and burnished to their satisfaction, the boots of their masters next underwent a violent brushing. This process was enlivened by the favourite soldier-song of "Come into the garden, Maud," until the eye of the singer suddenly and for the first time catching sight of my amused countenance watching him from beneath the blanket, he came to a dead stop, and with a confused "Oh, I beg your pardon ; look there, Fergusson,—we are disturbing her ladyship," picked up boots and brushes and blacking pot, and disappeared in the twinkling of an eye, followed by the servant to whom he had spoken. The next appearance on the scene was that of Captain Maude, who emerged from the house carrying a lot of blankets, which he offered to me. As, however, the rising hour had come and the cold hours of morning had passed away, they were not of much service, as may be imagined ! A visitor at this juncture

made his appearance, proving to be Mr. Pilkington of the 60th, the same who had sent us the mutton and bread overnight, and he had now come to see how we were getting on. We invited him to remain and breakfast with us, of which meal at the same time we had no brilliant anticipations, knowing too well, alas! that the *menu* of the last night's dinner would be repeated with painful similarity. Mutton and stale bread and black coffee, in which latter article the element of chicory smothered every pretension, was to be our fare; such luxuries as eggs, butter, and milk, being things unknown. However, early rising produces a keen appetite, and hunger relishes the humblest food. We were therefore all pretty keen to set to, and impatiently awaited the arrival of Sir Evelyn Wood, who, we expected, would pass this way on his road to Pretoria. In fact it had been already arranged that the General was to stop and breakfast with us, and the hour had already passed at which he had intimated he would arrive. While we were all wondering what had happened to him, and listening for the sound of the spider's wheels, the General suddenly made his appearance, mounted on an artillery horse. His clothes were dusty and soiled, and it hardly needed the explanation that followed to be

aware that an accident had occurred. It appeared that in descending the incline from the Ingogo battlefield, one of the horses that drew the spider had made an effort to bolt, and, communicating his restiveness to his companion, the animals had made at an alarming pace for the river. The postilion found it impossible to restrain them, and the consequences might have proved disastrous had not the near horse suddenly crossed his legs and come down with so much force as to render him powerless for the time being to rise again. The spider was overturned, and Sir Evelyn and his servant thrown violently on to the road, one of the wheels passing over the prostrate form of the General. Fortunately, beyond a severe shaking and a few bruises, no one was hurt, and he was able to mount the postilion's horse and gallop on to join us, leaving his servant to pick up the pieces and follow him as soon as possible.

Having despatched Mr. Pilkington on an errand to procure a fresh pair of horses, and Captain Maude in search of another spider at a store not far distant, the General, with the rest of us, proceeded to breakfast. I regretted the poorness of the fare, as he appeared a good deal shaken and scarcely touched the food that was set before him.

The return of Captain Maude with the spider,

and the arrival of Walkinshaw, the General's servant, with the damaged vehicle, made it necessary to get ready for a fresh start, and it was not long before Sir Evelyn was again settled in the position from which he had been so summarily ejected, and was once more bowling along the road *en route* for Pretoria.

After he was gone we ordered our horses to be got ready and started off for Lange's Nek. A broad irregular road led up to the position in question, and wound along the base of a chain of hills, of which the Inquela Mountain formed one of its principal features, being of remarkable shape and size, and joined to the more interesting Amajuba by a long ridge. With this mountain we rode on a parallel for some time, and had ample opportunity to remark on the impregnable position afforded by its eastern face, whose steep sides, intersected with innumerable gullies and crevices, give it a dark and forbidding aspect. Dipping into a little hollow or valley, we suddenly found ourselves at the foot of the long rising incline which led up to Lange's Nek. When I first beheld the place I was greatly disappointed. All accounts which I had hitherto read of it led me to believe it to be a second Killiecrankie Pass. Past descriptions of the Nek had repre-

sented it as a defile, but the road which led up to this position simply followed its old course through the Veldt, passing over Lange's Nek in a straight line. A line of forts extending from the right of the road from a north-to-easterly direction could, from our position, be distinctly discerned, and it was from these places that the defence was mostly conducted. Once on the summit of the Pass, and looking down from the Boer trenches on the ground up which our troops had to fight their way, the folly of attack became terribly apparent except with a large force. Truly 'twas but a fit imitation of the unnecessary charge of the gallant six hundred; and in the many valuable lives so uselessly thrown away we mourn the loss of friends, of relatives, and of men, who, we cannot but feel, were sacrificed in a hopeless cause, and died, alas! in vain.

Traces of the late occupation could be seen on all sides; the grass was battered down and close-cropped, while old boots, pots, and pans lay scattered about in every direction. We were not very much struck with the way in which the trenches were dug or thrown up, but probably and not unnaturally the Boers looked upon the heights as a pretty secure fortress, and in themselves a sufficient protection against any attack.

Turning to the westward, we rode along the eastern ridge, which connects the Amajuba and Lange's Nek, until, reaching the base of the mountain's northern face, up which the Boers had ascended, we dismounted and prepared to follow in their footsteps. In some places the ascent was very steep, but had the advantage of complete shelter in large disjointed masses of rock, behind which the attacking party could advance almost unperceived by those above, to whom they must have presented a somewhat similar appearance to rabbits amongst rocks and ferns—no sooner seen than immediately lost sight of—mere snap shots, not practicable with a rifle. This inability to cover the enemy contributed, I should imagine, in a great manner to our defeat on this occasion; and the impossibility of directing our fire until the Boers were within some forty or fifty yards of the summit must have been trying and disheartening in the extreme.

Much has been said about the daring attack of the Dutchmen. But in this ascent it must be borne in mind they were simply operating in their own element, and the slopes of the Amajuba were to them little more than child's play; indeed, when following the line taken by them myself, I do not remember to have paused once to take breath,

nor did I feel more blown upon reaching the summit than a breath of fresh air could dispel. What must it then have been to men who from their earliest childhood were familiar with and accustomed to such feats of hardiness, and to whom the ascent of any mountain was an easy task? Had the tables been turned, and the order given to charge across a plain and take an open position, this courage which has been so much applauded in the ascent of the Amajuba would not have been so apparent. Give honour to whom honour is due, and it will then be found that this assault, when looked at in all its bearings, was not the glorious affair drawn on the long bow of triumph by the Boers.

The summit of the Amajuba is very irregular, and the rocky ridge seen from the valley below extends nearly in a circle. In the centre the ground falls away to a hollow, and we therein came across the wells that had been dug by the order of General Colley. It was here the reserves of the 92d and 3-60th were placed, and not far off, under cover of a rocky ridge, the hospital was organised. I walked round the line occupied by the 92d; it appeared to be a very enlarged one, the defence of the brow assigned to them extending from a south-westerly position

to west, and from west to north. They must decidedly have had their hands full, inasmuch as from this it will be seen that the defence of three parts of the mountain fell to their share, the 58th occupying the north-west and westerly ridges, whose precipitous sides appeared to me sufficient protection in themselves; while the Naval Brigade, who had posted a small reserve with the others, had left traces in the south-west corner of the plateau of their recent occupation.

I picked up a letter evidently written by some sailor's sweetheart at home, but the paper was soiled and damp with many dews, and beyond the words "My dearest Jack," I could not decipher much. It was at this point that the gallant Captain Romilly was shot by men from below, the fire by which he was struck proceeding from advancing parties who had crept round unperceived to the south-west, and scaled the steep slopes, coming unawares upon the Naval Brigade. All who knew Captain Romilly will mourn his loss; in him passed away a charming and accomplished gentleman, and an officer rigid in the performance of his duties, one of distinguished merit and courage,—a life of bright promise and noble aims.

I wandered over the plateau and across the ground where the gallant 92d made their determined stand; cartridge cases lay thickly strewn along the brow, and impromptu fortifications were still left standing. One stone in particular, about half the size of a man's body, was seared and scarred with bullet marks, and presented a strange appearance. This had evidently been a hot corner, and the pile of empty cartridges testified to the determined stand which must have been made by the occupier. Down in the hollow, and close to the wells, I came across a tiny cairn of stones; it marked the place where the gallant but unfortunate General, who had thrown his own fortunes in with his men, fell with his face to the foe. The condemning tongue grows silent in the presence of true valour. There, where the fight was thickest,—where the bullets rained their deadly shower,—he fell; he is now dead, and praise and blame fall on his ear alike. Let us admire the courage and compassionate the misfortune of one who died a soldier's death. Not far removed from the cairn I could see the grave of Captain Maude, and the tiny cemetery wherein were interred the men who fell that day. A small wooden cross headed the former, with the words "Captain Maude." rudely traced thereon; some immortelles

had been laid on the grave, that of the soldiers being similarly decorated. When at a somewhat later date I again visited this spot, a beautiful marble cross had replaced the wooden one, and the graves were in perfect order.

While my companions completed their rounds of observation, I went and seated myself on the summit of a precipitous rock on the north-west side of the mountain. A grand view could be embraced from this position, which overlooked a vast expanse of country, in which the distant peaks of Basutoland were visible, and the countries of the Orange Free State, the Transvaal, Zululand, and Natal, extended in circling panorama around. Beneath me the rocks fell away in sheer precipice some six or seven hundred feet, terminating in thickly wooded slopes and grassy banks; and far away below wound a fertile valley, watered by many streams, the home, no doubt, of some farmer, whose house could be just distinguished peeping out from amidst a thick clump of trees, the blue smoke circling from their tops giving evidence that man lived therein. We descended the mountain by the path up which our troops had come. In some places it was extremely steep, and it cannot be wondered at that, heavily laden as they were with greatcoats, waterproof sheets, three days'

rations, and their arms and ammunition, besides six picks and four shovels per company, they found themselves too exhausted to intrench on reaching the summit.

When we got below we mounted our horses, which our servants had brought round by a path on the western side of the mountain over the combined Nek of the Inquela and Amajuba, and rode towards the camp of the mounted infantry, which lay not far distant. On our way we passed close by O'Neill's Farm, distinguished as being the place where an ignoble peace was signed; but, not caring to stop to visit so painful a spot, we hurried on to partake of the hospitality of the mess, our appetites being of the keenest. Indeed, in recalling that time, I cannot help thinking that we must have presented the appearance of sharks or famished wolves more than anything else in the greedy manner with which we begged to be at once introduced to our food. It would seem that the gallant major commanding had quite anticipated our wants, for on being ushered into the mess tent we found a repast that made our mouths water ready awaiting us. As may be imagined, we did ample justice to everything; indeed some of my companions, much in the fashion of schoolboys, gorged themselves

to such a degree that, in my indignant remonstrances, I could only liken them to vultures. Remorse, however, came quickly when we were once more in the saddle and galloping quickly in the direction of Mount Prospect. How they regretted when it was too late the over-excesses in which they had indulged ! On our way to the camp we turned aside to visit the little cemetery in which so many of our gallant officers lay. It was sad work standing by the last resting-place of many whose faces rose up with strange distinctness, bringing to memory voices not long since heard, now hushed and silent in their last long sleep. Beside his chief lay young Elwes, aide-de-camp to Sir George Colley. We had been play-mates in childhood, and friends in later years. Standing by the grave of the gallant boy, I found old scenes recurring with great force and vividness. It is ever thus : old memories arise, each trivial circumstance of childhood returns ; old sayings, doings, and pastimes crop up again ; voices come back from the far past ; and in the recollection of the early and happy years of childhood, for a few brief moments as you stand by the grave of some cherished friend, those golden halcyon days are lived o'er again.

We left Mount Prospect the next day, reaching Signal Hill in time for a cheery lunch with the 15th Hussars. That evening a grand banquet, given by the Inniskillings, in which the element of generals abounded, brought to a close a day pleasantly spent and pleasantly recalled.

CHAPTER VI.

A SOUTH AFRICAN GRAND MILITARY—THE RACECOURSE—
THE FATE OF JOHN GILPIN—A HUNTING EXPEDITION—
SUCCESSFUL TRAVELLING—WATCHING A STALKER—AN
INVALUABLE SERVANT—FINAL DIRECTIONS.

THE morning of the 26th of April opened with unusual stir and bustle. It was a day which had long been looked forward to with the greatest excitement, for which much preparation had been undergone and great anticipations formed. A race meeting! nothing more or less, and dignified under the title of "The Grand Military at Signal Hill." It embraced every kind of race belonging to both the legitimate and illegitimate sports; every manner of horse or pony with any pretensions to gallop filled up the long list of entries; the stakes worth winning were in considerable numbers; and altogether the prospects of the day were of the highest. About an hour before the time at which proceedings were to commence a large party of us rode down to the course, which had been laid out in circular fashion on either side of the road lead-

ing to Mount Prospect. A great gathering of people from Newcastle and the surrounding district had already assembled, the black element decidedly predominating. Waggon and vehicles of every description lined either side of the course nearest the winning post, impromptu betting stands had been erected, and everything done to give the whole affair a business-like appearance. There were several mess tents in course of erection, destined to dispense the hospitalities of different regiments, the most noticeable being a large marquee belonging to the 15th Hussars, in which a lunch worthy of Ascot or Goodwood was being laid out.

With the arrival of the General and his staff proceedings commenced. The saddling bell sounded, the numbers of the first race went up, and the horses one by one began to assemble at the starting-post. There were a great number, and several false starts took place; eventually, however, the flag fell, and they got away in excellent order. This race was won, after a close and exciting finish, by a good-looking, well-bred colonial horse called *Charcoal*. He was steered to victory by Captain Sullivan, who, however, had his work well cut out for him in defeating the second, an animal ridden by Lord St. Vincent. This latter threw

the race away by declaring a stone and a half over weight, in order that he might ride his own horse; had it not been so, the result would have been undoubtedly otherwise.

The second race gave rise to several amusing scenes. In it was entered a mare called *Mooi River*, the property of Captain Beresford, by whom he set great store, and in whom he placed great faith. She had, previous to his buying her, won a Ladies' Purse somewhere or other, and the golden visions of the gay engineer pictured her the winner on this occasion. The services of my cousin as her jockey were secured, and no sooner was he mounted than we all made for the starting-post to see the start for this famous race. The behaviour of *Mooi River* was everything that could be desired, and though many of the others fidgeted a good deal she remained perfectly quiet; but it soon proved a case of "butter won't melt," etc., for no sooner had the flag fallen than she swerved violently on one side, and, taking the bit into her teeth, dashed in amongst the crowd, cannoning every one right and left. Pursuing her erratic course, and notwithstanding all the efforts of my cousin to prevent her, she made straight for a gentleman who, apart from the crowd, was riding a somewhat restive horse, and cannoning up against

him sent the affrighted animal careering wildly over the Veldt, bearing with him his clinging and helpless owner. The sight was ludicrous, and we were at the same time horribly unfeeling, as the shouts of laughter on all sides testified. Away went the unhappy John Gilpin, his horse performed a large semicircle, and brought him round towards the racecourse, which reached, he never paused, but, continuing on his way, disappeared over a high hill in the direction of Newcastle. I never learnt his fate. Poor *Moor Racer*, she came in for a good deal of abuse after this, but made up for her bad behaviour later in the day by running very well in the big steeplechase, which should have been won by an English thoroughbred called *Darkie*, who, however, managed to dispose of his rider in a very neat manner. Swerving at a stone wall, the man was sent flying; and thus the race, which would otherwise have been a certainty for the thoroughbred, was thrown away. This horse had previously won that day two flat races, and his performances had all the greater interest for me, inasmuch as I had ridden him in some of his gallops and predicted his sure success.

It was a picturesque sight to see the gallant General commanding stretched out on the grass

under a waggon, entertaining the Boer leaders to a champagne lunch. As I rode by, Sir Evelyn courteously invited me to make one of the party ; but having already accepted the invitation of the 15th I was forced to decline, and rode on towards the large marquee erected by that regiment, accompanied by General Buller, whose blunter nature would not bother itself to whisper soft nothings in the ears of Messrs. Joubert, Pretorius, and Jorrissen. Later on in the day I was introduced to these gentlemen ; but as their knowledge of English was restricted to a few words, and my capability of making myself understood in their *patois* was small, the conversation sustained was not, as may be imagined, of a very brilliant nature ; so I returned to the horses and the races, and with a final scurry over hurdles, in which I was nearly jumped upon and annihilated altogether, a very enjoyable and successful meeting terminated.

Amusements at this period seemed to come all together, and no sooner was one excitement over than another appeared. The prospect of moving could only be looked forward to on some distant and shadowy date, and all hope of a quick return home was out of the question. Amongst ourselves an expedition had been planned and

frequently discussed, and it was over our simple dinner that night that the project was further mooted. At last, after a good deal of discussion, a hartebeest hunt was announced, and my cousin and Captain Sullivan agreed to form members of the party. Having obtained leave, and a further loan from the colonel of a mule waggon and its team, while I was fortunate in securing another in other quarters, we at once set about our preparations. These, however, did not occupy a very great deal of time, and the second morning after the races saw them all completed and everything ready for an immediate start.

Away we went, happy as kings, and like so many children, delighted with the holiday in prospect. The mule waggons rattled along at a tremendous pace down the steep road leading from Signal Hill to Newcastle; the dust rose in clouds and enveloped us in its choking veil, Kaffir dogs flew out from wayside kraals and barked defiance, while the inmates stared and grinned good-naturedly in answer to our salutations. Keeping Fort Amiel on our right, we crossed the drift over the river and skirted Newcastle in like manner. The heat was great, and our horses suffered a good deal, while we found ourselves frequently halting to refresh and water

them by the sides of every drift and stream over which we crossed. About twelve miles from Newcastle we turned off the road, and struck across the Veldt in the direction of a curiously shaped hill which rose from the middle of a vast plain like a great pyramid, and near which we hoped to come across the hartebeest. We could not, however, reach our final destination that day, and in consequence called a halt by the side of a clear sparkling river, into which, the moment they were let loose, every mule and horse speedily found its way, drinking long and eagerly of the refreshing beverage. The only drawback to camping by a river is the swarm of midges which at once assemble to annoy one as the sun goes down. This occasion proved no exception to the general rule, and we were terribly teased and tormented by these tiresome little creatures. The following morning we struck camp and continued on our way, still pointing for the Leo Kop. A lonely Boer farmhouse was the only thing we came across that gave any indication of the presence of man, and a timely raid in search of eggs terminated successfully in our procuring some dozens of these fresh-laid delicacies. We found a good deal of trouble in packing them to prevent breakage, and the basket containing them was event-

ually slung on to the waggon. As we were following no kind of track, we were frequently stopped by deep, treacherous-looking swamps and bogs, into which the waggons sank deeply ; and in the joltings which ensued on the mules' endeavours to extricate their load, it was a perfect marvel to me how every egg was not smashed. Fortunately, however, each danger was successfully tided over, and we at length found ourselves on a smooth hard plain, with plenty of easy going. All obstacles being apparently overcome, we pointed out to our servants the distant position where we wished our camp laid out, and having seen them well on their way towards the spot, we separated for the time being, and spread ourselves out over the Veldt in different directions, taking with us a gun or a rifle in the hope of falling in with game of some sort, which might help to fill the pot and afford sport. I had been riding along for about half an hour without seeing anything, when the Basuto pony on which I was mounted suddenly shied at something concealed in the long grass. Frightened by the action of the pony, a lovely little gazelle-like antelope, not larger than a hare, immediately sprang to its feet, and, after staring at me with large dark eyes dilating with terror, turned and fled across the

Veldt with quick graceful bounds. Poor little beast! it might have saved itself the trouble, and I regretted my inability to assure it of its complete safety from incurring any harm at my hands. To wander amidst wilds untainted by the stain of civilisation, to watch the ways and manners of the untamed denizens of these lonely scenes, to creep into close proximity to them unheard and unseen, must always possess for the wanderer and the lover of nature a strange charm. It is this very feeling that stirs the heart of the stalker and the sportsman, whose satisfied longing is not, however, satiated until, by the unequal power which he carries in his hand, he has destroyed and laid low that which a few minutes before had stood in all the beauty of life and enjoyment, harmless, unsuspecting, and helpless, but now the quivering victim of man's pleasure. As I rode along I could hear the frequent report of a gun which proceeded from the direction taken by my cousin, and far away to the westward I could at the same time distinguish several herds of hartebeest quietly grazing. I felt sure that Captain Sullivan would not fail to catch sight of them, and I found myself wondering what a nice steak of hartebeest would taste like, and picturing the dish being placed on the table—all the

while counting my chickens before they were hatched. In my conjecture that Captain Sullivan would be sure to see them I was, however, correct, for on riding over some rising ground I caught sight of him moving along under cover of a long low slope, with the evident intention of circumventing their grazing ground and coming upon them unawares. The herd had, however, winded something, and were on the alert, for I saw them moving still farther to the westward, keeping close together, and in the open ground rendering it difficult, if not impossible, to approach them unseen. I watched him for a short time, but, the operation growing tedious, I turned my pony's head in the direction of our camp. Some little white specks by the side of a long dark green line betokened where it lay, and thither I galloped at a good pace, arriving to find a busy scene of bustle and activity going on. Unsaddling my pony, he was quickly careering over the Veldt to join his wandering companions and the mules, who were regaling themselves some way off on the young green grass sprouting afresh from a patch of burnt land. I then turned to give a hand to the general tidying up of the camp; blankets were quickly unstrapped, and our sleeping-couches made up; a cheery fire was set

blazing; mealies and oats ready placed for the mules and horses when they should be taken up for the night, and the clothing of the latter neatly arranged along the picketing lines. Before long the place had begun to assume an air of cosy comfort, which I felt would not be lost upon the others when they returned. After a bit they began to appear one by one, but beyond some winged game nothing of much importance was contributed towards the pot, and the visions of hartebeest steak were, alas, still but dreams of the future! The anticipation of the morrow's sport, however, kept every one in capital spirits, and the dinner and evening that followed was pleasantly spent in discussing the various plans to be made, until the moon, shining brightly high up in the clear night sky, warned us that it was time to seek the couches where restlessness and sleeplessness were unknown.

Hardly had the sun risen on the following morning when I was aroused by the sound of a horse's tramp, and peering through an opening in my tent to learn the cause, I found that it was occasioned by the return of Fergusson, Captain Sullivan's servant, who had received orders overnight to proceed as far as the road drift over the Ingagane River, and there leave word with the

hôte-keeper as to our whereabouts. This was done by previous agreement with the colonel of the 15th, and formed a point for communication should he by any chance require our immediate return. I could not but admire the promptitude with which this man had executed his orders, as the point in question lay some eight miles distant, in consequence of which he must have made at least two good hours' start before the sun rose. A closer and longer acquaintance proved him to be a most valuable servant. There were few things he could not put his hands to ; and later on, when I had an opportunity of observing him on the march, the amount of work he seemed to get through was perfectly surprising. His good example in early rising found on this occasion willing imitators, for my own servant Tom, and Evelyn, soon made their appearance, and busied themselves feeding and grooming the horses—the indefatigable Fergusson in the meanwhile having lit a fire and commenced the operation of scone-making. After a bit the others made their appearance, and went down to the water's side for a plunge, while I completed my own toilet in my tent. Ere they returned the whole place had been tidied up, and the table laid for breakfast, a meal for which we were all ready ; and I leave

my readers to judge for themselves whether we fared badly or not in the enumeration of the following *menu*. There was hot coffee and tea to be had at will, bread and butter, scones, a beefsteak and potatoes, crisp bacon and eggs, with boiled eggs for those who wanted them. On these delicacies we made a hearty breakfast, and then turned our attention to the grand excitement of the day, the hartebeest drive.

Away to the north-westward we could distinguish a large herd of these animals; and it was decided to send the servants round by a circuitous route so as to get behind them, and endeavour to drive them over a kind of low neck or pass on the eastern side of the Leo Kop, and along which a line of rocks running transversely would afford excellent cover for those lying in wait. Some discussion ensued as to whether we should take our horses or not, but it was finally decided to send them with the servants, who could bring them up as soon as they heard the report of the rifle; so everything being satisfactorily arranged, the three started off to place themselves, leaving me to see the drivers off as soon as I had given them necessary law. As soon as this was done I was to follow the course of the stream running south-

wards, and, keeping under cover of some long grass, take up a position close to a hartebeest trail which had been discovered by Captain Sullivan on the previous day; so, having given final directions, and seen the men started on the job before them, I took my rifle and set out upon my way.

CHAPTER VII.

ABUNDANT NATURE—THE DOLCE FAR NIENTE—WANDERING
ANTELOPES—A WOUNDED HARTEBEEST—A DISAPPOINT-
MENT—SUCCESS—AFTER LABOUR COMETH REST.

THE course of the stream that I followed ran through a deep gully or cutting in the Veldt, so that in walking along I ran no risk of being seen by any animal on the plain above. Life seemed to abound in these regions, and the tiny steenbuck kept springing up in all directions, darting away with quick graceful bounds until they thought themselves out of danger, when, with the true instinct of the antelope, they would wheel round and follow me with curious and wondering eyes. At a bend in the stream I came across a lot of wild duck, and regretted the absence of a gun, which would have added so materially to the contents of the pot. They rose, quacking forth defiance and disdain on my rifle, and startling in their fishing operations two stately Mahaan birds who were standing by a deep sedgy pool, with

their long necks half buried in the water. As I approached they extended their wings with slow and dignified caution, sailing away to other "pastures new."

It was not long before I reached the spot where it had been arranged I should hide myself. I found the grass growing to a great height, and the place well adapted for a place of concealment. Creeping into the thick cover it afforded, I was soon extended at my ease, and prepared to await the results of the drive, which I knew must be yet some time before taking place, as, though the servants were mounted, they had a great deal of ground to get over. I congratulated myself on having fallen into such comfortable and luxurious quarters as I stretched myself on the soft grass and gave myself up to dreamy repose and the delights of the *dolce far niente*. The ripple of the stream close by struck on my ear with soothing melody, the hot sun shone down with tremendous power, and the drowsy effect produced thereby was to invite sleep and forgetfulness. I was very nearly becoming a victim to the surrounding influences, when some distant objects which appeared to be moving my way suddenly caught my eye. Crouching as close along the ground as possible, I parted the long

grass and cautiously peered through the opening. The animals, whatever they were, appeared to be making at a good pace straight for the place where I lay concealed, and were rapidly nearing the spot. As they approached I could make out that they were not hartebeest; and as we had agreed to confine ourselves that day to securing one of these animals, I judged it best to lay aside my rifle, which I was not sorry to do, and settled myself to watch these wandering gems of the Veldt free from the malicious intention to do grievous bodily harm.

They came steadily on, free from any kind of fear or apprehension; and as they drew near I was able to examine them more closely. A species of very beautiful, dark-coloured, dark-eyed antelope they appeared to me; and to this day I cannot class them, nor did I come across their species again during the whole of my wanderings in South Africa. An old bull was leading the herd, which consisted principally of the cows of his species and a few half-grown young. He appeared a most careful and solicitous pilot; for, on reaching the little incline which led down to the water's edge, he paused and looked round to see if everything was all right before trusting himself and family to the hollow

before him. Finding the surrounding aspect clear of apparent danger, the bull, with a stamp of his right foot and a peculiar cry, trotted down to the water's edge, and soon the nostrils of the entire herd were deeply buried beneath the clear cool waters. They took a long time to slake their thirst, and from the avidity with which they drank it struck me that they must have been travelling long and far, and were probably mere birds of passage passing away from old haunts—rendered insecure by the advance of civilisation—to discover, farther north, fresh “pastures new.”

I suppose I must have moved slightly in my posture of observation, for suddenly, with a startled snort, the bull wheeled round and confronted me. Immediately the cows and calves closed up together and clustered about his heels, while every eye was turned towards the spot where I lay concealed. Finding that I had been discovered, I rose from my crouching position and showed myself. The effect was interesting to watch, as the curiosity of the antelope for a moment overmastered his timidity, and he began to advance towards me. A slight movement of my hand was enough, however, to dispel the latent courage of the moment; and with a terrified snort he turned, and, driving the herd before him,

disappeared over the Veldt in the direction of our camp, leaving me once more to solitude and watchfulness.

I returned to my place of concealment, having satisfied myself with one glance around that there were no hartebeest in sight; the excitement aroused by the past incident related tended to prevent any further desire for sleep, and the look-out I kept up was therefore more attentive. I had not long to wait, when the sudden report of a rifle put me altogether on the alert, and in a moment I was once more peering through the long grass that surrounded me. There sure enough they were!—a large herd of hartebeest, galloping at full speed across a bit of open ground, affording me a splendid view of their movements. To my excited vision the whole herd appeared to be wounded, and I found myself picking them out right and left, making sure that first this one, then that one, was going on only three legs. In my delusion I was a good deal assisted by the lumbering gait of the animals, who to the uninitiated have every appearance of lameness when seen galloping from a distance. I am afraid that my over-curiosity and impatience to get a good view of them frustrated the chance that existed of their coming my way; indeed, the heads of the

whole herd at one time pointed in my direction, but something must have frightened them, for they bore away to the westward; and though they kept stopping, wheeling round, and looking back over the ground they had come, their point had evidently been made, from which danger could alone have headed them.

While watching their slow flight across the uneven Veldt, I was surprised to see one of the hartebeests detach itself from the herd and come galloping in my direction. Occasionally it would pause, as if to rest itself, and then resume its slow canter. The stoppages became at last more and more frequent, and as the animal approached I could see that its fore-leg was broken. Seeing how badly the poor brute was hurt, I became all the more anxious to get a shot at it, and if possible end its sorrows; so, cautiously grasping my rifle, I wriggled myself into a sitting posture and awaited an opportunity to fire. Suddenly, and apparently for no rhyme or reason, the hartebeest swerved away to the left, and altered his course in such a manner that by the time he would get in a line with my rifle, the distance would make it a difficult and hazardous shot. I was at my wits' end what to do, and the fear of losing him filled me with dismay. To advance

was to show myself at once, and thus banish the last chance of getting near him; while, if I wished to make sure of the game, it was imperative that I should get forward a bit. In this dilemma I cast my eye round to see if there was no kind of cover under which I could reach a fresh position, when I noticed a slight fall in the ground not very far away. Without a moment's hesitation I lost no time in crawling on hands and knees to the place in question, which I found to be a kind of sloping bank running parallel with the position I had quitted. This was fortunate, and I started to run at full speed, keeping well under cover until reaching the end of the donga. I cautiously crept up its sides, and peered over a large rock or stone in search of my game. No position could have been better chosen: the hartebeest was barely three hundred yards away, and coming straight for me. I was fearfully excited, and either from this cause or from the exertion of running my hand positively trembled. As he advanced I was struck by the extraordinary formation of the animal's head, the eyes being very high in the forehead, and the great horns curling up and tapering backwards. This, with a long dark nose, gave him a strange and even ludicrous appearance, which made me laugh when I looked at him.

He came on slowly, frequently pausing to rest himself, so that I had ample time to compose myself and get into good position to shoot. I had arranged myself to my satisfaction, and had made up my mind to fire the very next time he should pause,—I had even brought my rifle to my shoulder, so as to lose no time in doing the deed,—when in the distance, and just in the line of fire, appeared five horsemen, who, immediately catching sight of the hartebeest, came galloping towards him at full speed. Of course under the circumstances it was impossible to fire, and, thoroughly disgusted at the turn affairs had taken, I no longer tried to conceal myself, but arose at once from my crouching posture. My appearance seemed greatly to astonish the animal, who, immediately on catching sight of me, came to a dead stop and confronted me with wondering eyes. It was a splendid opportunity for a shot, but I possessed not the confidence of William Tell, and, fearful lest I should miss, and thus jeopardise the lives of my companions, I was forced to remain inactive. How long the hartebeest would have retained his observant position I do not know, had his ear not detected the sound of the galloping horsemen. With a quick movement he turned and made observation of the

approaching danger, which he doubtless thought he had escaped, and in another moment was disappearing over some rising ground, followed in hot pursuit by myself and the enemy which had so lately appeared. Though I got a good start of my companions, they being mounted soon caught me up and passed me, and I was left to struggle on over the rough uneven Veldt. I was, however, too excited to experience any fatigue, and quite forgot that the sun was burning with all the intensity of midday. Being very fit, as fast as I got blown a second's pause would bring me to again, and the farther I ran the more I felt the increasing easiness of my task. On breasting the rising ground over which the hartebeest had disappeared, I caught sight of the quarry and hunters about a quarter of a mile away. They had got close up to him, and my husband and cousin were in the act of springing from their horses. A minute later, and two blue puffs of smoke, followed by the reports of a rifle, told me that one of them had tried to arrest the further progress of the wounded animal. Whoever it was proved unsuccessful, for the hartebeest still continued to canter away, though now his movements were very slow and labouring. It was his last effort, however, and a third shot sent him

toppling head foremost to the ground, where shortly afterwards, arriving upon the scene, I found the *coup de grâce* had been given, and the animal was no more.

"Hartebeest steak to-night!" called out my cousin triumphantly to me as I joined them, and we clustered round the dead beast with that pleasant feeling of success which all sportsmen and hunters will understand and share with me. It was a large full-grown cow in excellent condition, and the visions of untold feasts helped to multiply the satisfaction of the moment. But the animal had to be skinned, cut up, and the head secured for stuffing, eventually to become the property of my husband, whose shot he had been. While my companions occupied themselves with this task I sat down to rest, when, for the first time, I noticed that all the horses had disappeared with the exception of Captain Sullivan's. On looking round, there, true enough, they all were, quite a mile away, trotting back to camp. Mounting the only horse that remained, I set off in pursuit. As long as the animal confined itself to quietly galloping I did not find my seat so very insecure. Mounted sideways on a man's saddle is not, however, the most comfortable position in the world, and when the horse suddenly put his

foot into an ant-bear hole and came down on his head, I too lost my balance and imitated his example. The ground was very hard, and though I broke no bones I gave myself a good shaking. Rising, I ruefully proceeded to remount my steed, who appeared rather sheepish and knocked out of time himself; and, rendered wiser by our late experience, we were both more careful than we had hitherto been. When I came up with the straying horses they showed a strong disinclination to be brought back, and had it not been for the friendly interposition of the river, which helped to turn them from their course, I do not think that I should have been equal to the task of stopping them. One in particular evinced the most rebellious signs against being kept in order, flourishing his heels, neighing and galloping about in his wicked efforts to excite his companions and render them as unmanageable as himself; for I had no sooner collected them together and begun to drive them in the direction whence they had strayed, than Punch—for so the pony was named—would break away and behave in the manner I have described. The timely arrival of Fergusson on the scene assisted in a great measure to restore order, and we succeeded in driving the unwilling animals back to their masters. When I rode up

I found that the hartebeest had been skinned, and the choicest morsels cut off. There remained nothing further to be done but to secure these trophies of our day's sport to the saddles, which we did not find such an easy task, as the meat had not been cut up in a very business-like manner, and the necessary sinews had been omitted.

When everything was completed we mounted and rode slowly back to camp, discussing all along the occurrences of the day. The hartebeest drive had not produced the immense results which our morning dreams had anticipated; nevertheless we could not but congratulate ourselves on having secured at least one, and by no means dissatisfied with the result of our first attempt we returned in the highest spirits to camp. Plenty was there to be done on our arrival, and the cooks at once set to to prepare the soup and hartebeest steak for that night's dinner. Occupied one way and the other, the remainder of the afternoon sped quickly by, until the sun, setting behind the distant Leokop and far-off range of the mighty Drakensberg, warned us that the time was drawing near when labour ceaseth and rest and enjoyment come. We were soon seated in our snug tent discussing the merits of the result of our day's sport. Harte-

beest steak was pronounced excellent, tender as lamb, and very tasty. Having done justice to the excellent cooking of Fergusson, we handed the remains to the men; and while they ate their dinner round the cheery blaze of the camp fire, cards were produced in the tent, and whist occupied our undivided attention until bed time. What wonder if, in the dreams that visited our pillows that night, the hartebeest and ace of hearts danced strange attendance side by side, jumbling together in all the intricacies and marvels of Wonderland?

CHAPTER VIII.

ANOTHER SUCCESS—AN ARDUOUS CLIMB—A NATIVE LEVÉE—
BAREBACKED RIDING—A ROUGH NIGHT—SURROUNDED BY
FIRE—DISCOMFORT—AN AFTER-DINNER RIDE.

THE rest of the week flew very quickly by. Each day was chiefly spent after the hartebeests, but our success was not brilliant, the wary animals proving very wild and difficult to approach. Captain Sullivan was fortunate, however, in securing one on the last day of our stay in those parts, and returned late that night on foot, having lost his horse, who had taken fright at the report of his rifle, and seized the opportunity to make off. Having spent the best part of an hour in fruitless efforts to catch him, Captain Sullivan thought it best while light yet remained to find his way back to the camp. Luckily Fergusson was with him, and the hartebeest was packed away on to the man's horse, besides a little steenbuck and a fine pow, which had also been bagged that day. The hartebeest proved to be a fine old bull, and

his head, the trophy of the successful stalker, was reserved for stuffing.

I was up at break of day on the morning of our departure, and, saddling a pony before any one was stirring, rode off towards the Leokop with the intention of climbing to the summit to see the sun rise. On my way thither I startled in their morning's nap several old hartebeest bulls, who, after staring at me for a few seconds in petrified astonishment, made off as hard as they could go, doubtless wondering what strange apparition I was. A number of nasty spruits had to be crossed, but my pony was a sagacious animal, and we managed them in safety. A good deal of time was, however, lost at each place, and as I approached the Leokop the sun was already beginning to rise. All around the base of the mountain nestled amidst the long grass numberless little native kraals and villages. Cattle and goats occupied the laagers, and as the sun rose the former clamoured loudly for release; while the appearance of fresh smoke, slowly rising from many of the kraals showed that the inhabitants were awake and stirring. I was astonished at the height and steepness of the mountain I had come to climb, distance having greatly deceived my calculation. In some places the grass grew

high above my head, and soon the rugged nature of the ground obliged me to dismount. Tying my horse to a species of mountain ash, I turned to leave him, when a horrible coiling object suddenly raised itself up and hissed at me. I started back, recognising the deadly puff-adder in the animal before me, and hastened to place both myself and my horse in a more secure position. Choosing a spot where the grass grew shorter, I left him to graze in peace, and commenced the ascent of the Leokop. I have seldom had a more arduous or fatiguing occupation, and many a time felt tempted to turn back. Masses of disjointed rocks, whose sides were precipices in themselves, had to be scaled and descended in turn, while the dense underwood and thick high grass rendered progress exceedingly difficult. In endeavouring to cross a kind of chasm or cleft between two rocks, the branch to which I was clinging snapped in two, and before I could catch at another I found myself huddled up in hopeless confusion at the bottom of the crevice. Fortunately I was not hurt, and I at once proceeded to make inspection of my new position. I found myself in a kind of cave, the walls of which were overgrown with a beautiful kind of blue-flowered creeper. Little lizards darted about like so many glittering gems,

and the spot was extremely lovely. But I felt uncomfortable, and found myself dreading the appearance of some venomous reptile, which might render my position both unpleasant and dangerous. Happily the blue creeper I have mentioned proved of the same strong texture as Jack found the beanstalk, and it was to its friendly offices as a ladder that I owed my escape from the prison into which I had fallen. The remainder of the ascent soon after this grew easier, and I was not sorry when the brushwood and rocks came to an end, and I found myself on green grass once more. The view obtained from the summit certainly repaid me for the exertions I had undergone, and the fresh exhilarating air soon refreshed and invigorated me. Far away below I could distinguish my horse still quietly feeding, and could not but admire the simple honesty of the many Kaffirs who kept passing that way between their kraals without an attempt to kidnap the animal. One of them stopped to look at him, and my heart beat for the result; but having satisfied his curiosity, this son of the Veldt, whose honesty I had done him the injustice to doubt, passed along as had the others, and I felt that any danger in that direction was illusory.

Still farther away I could make out some little

specks close to the glancing waters of a green-lined stream, which I knew to be our tents; and some black moving objects in close proximity told me that my companions were on the move, and that these were the mules and horses released for their morning meal and drink. I was thereby warned that the time had come to think about returning, and having taken a last look at the magnificent panorama that lay around I proceeded to make the descent. This I found to be if possible more difficult than the ascent had been, and many a shave did I run that morning of being buried alive in unknown clefts, whose depths I was fortunately not forced to test. I confess I was not sorry to reach my horse, the riding boots in which I had performed the climb having severely suffered from the effects, so that walking was no longer a pleasure. A group of Kaffirs came, and gathered round me as I mounted my horse; and though I could not understand what they were saying, it was evident that my every movement caused them wonder, fear, and amusement, by turns. "Good morning, Johnnies," said I, at which they burst into shrieks of laughter, the younger women nearly giggling themselves into fits, and deriving immense amusement from the fact of my having spoken. Though

I confess I myself did not see the ludicrous side of the matter, I repeated my salutation, which was greeted with similar evidences of jocularity. Happening to have a piece of bread in my pocket, I held it out towards the group. A great deal of confabulation was the result, and some discussion seemed to be going on amongst the elder men. I put it to my mouth and bit off a little piece, which I proceeded to eat. This evidently satisfied them that treachery was not intended, for, with a long-drawn exclamation, one of the men advanced and took it from my hand. In a minute every one had had a bite of the precious morsel, and the delicacy was duly appreciated.

As I rode away, fresh exclamations of wonder broke out on all sides; and when I turned to look again after riding a little more than a mile, I could see the group still assembled and gazing after my retreating form. On reaching camp I found breakfast awaiting me; I leave it to my readers to imagine whether I did justice to it or not.

We experienced a great deal of trouble that morning in finding our mules and horses. I believe that the sagacious animals were aware of our intended departure, and preferred the sweet fresh grass of the uninhabited Veldt, to that burnt-

up apology for it at Newcastle. Our muleteers too were generally lazy, and declared they had searched everywhere for the missing animals, whereas in reality they had simply, as soon as out of sight, lain down to indulge in a smoke and siesta. On the old principle that if you want a thing done you must do it yourself, I started off to look for the mules. In my search I came across two of Captain Sullivan's horses reclining, in calm and provoking laziness, on some green burnt grass, in which they were indulging. Not in the best of humours, I soon had them on their legs, and, manufacturing an impromptu bridle out of the head-collar and ream on the horse's head, by the help of a friendly ant-heap I managed to scramble on to the back of my old friend of the first hartebeest hunt. His back was very slippery, and I found some difficulty in keeping my balance. In my efforts, my spur touched his side, and a tremendous buck was the result. Of course I at once met mother earth; but as I had slipped from the horse's back rather than fallen, I arose unhurt. At this juncture, and while leading the animal towards some neighbouring rocks, with the intention of remounting, I came across one of the muleteers stretched out under their shade fast asleep. He started up at the sound

of the horse's tread, and appeared rather sheepish, offering no reply to my indignant remonstrances. Not two hundred yards away from the spot where he had lain down to rest, browsed, in a convenient and secluded hollow, the mules for which so much search had been made. I at once sent him to collect them, and though we worked hard we found it no easy matter to manage. The obstinate animals would not be driven towards the camp, and I believe would have entirely nonplussed us, but for the timely arrival of Captain Sullivan, who appeared leading a pony saddled for myself. Changing mounts, I found myself more at home, and with this timely and extra help we eventually managed to reduce the mules to obedience. This protracted delay, however, resulted in a late start, and we found ourselves compelled to camp that evening some ten or twelve miles outside Newcastle. On riding into the town the next day, we were informed that the 15th Hussars had moved camp to the Drakensberg, some eight or ten miles distant. Thither we followed, and came upon them in a very pretty but very uncomfortable position. The camp was pitched on a steep slope directly beneath the towering heights of tree-covered precipices, and the strong wind which blew off the upper Veldt of the

Drakensberg rendered the putting up of tents a difficult matter, and the dust and general discomfort not small. It was late that night before we got everything into ship-shape order and neatness, without which camp life would be unbearable; but all through the night the wind blew and howled, and I had frequently to get up and hold the poles of the tent to keep it from falling. The 60th, who were also encamped close by, had many of their tents blown down, and some of the hussars' shared the same fate; so that we should have been proportionately grateful to our stout little Indian tent that so bravely withstood the hurricane. As the wind did not abate, the colonel of the 15th, on the third day, gave orders to strike tents and change the camp. We ourselves put off moving our own until the next day, as assistance from the regiment would be then more readily forthcoming.

It had grown dark, and I had paid my last visit to the horses for the night, when, standing outside one of the tents, a strange gleam of light shot up into the air, lighting up the mountains above with vivid distinctness. "What's that?" I called out to my servant, who was bending over the fire close by. The words were hardly out of my mouth when a sound which former experience

had rendered me only too well acquainted with broke on my ear. "It's a fire!" I shouted to my husband, who was half asleep in his tent, and out he rushed. There, true enough, crackling and roaring, with the smoke rising in dense volumes, it came, bearing down upon our little tents. In a few minutes it had spread far and wide, and the whole line beneath the base of the mountain was enveloped in flames. Our first care was to loosen the horses and bring them all together in readiness for instant release, should the fire reach us, and the next was to loosen the tent cords and lower the tents. Our great hope lay in the fact that not twenty yards on our left a deep, broad spruit ran parallel with our camp, which was pitched in a mealie garden; and the wind, blowing from our right, would drive the fire away from us and prevent its jumping the spruit, had it not already done so. To all appearance the flames seemed to be bearing right down upon us, but we knew the deception of fires, and hoped for the best. Though we did not personally stand in long grass, the mealie garden in which we were was very narrow, and long dry grass and brushwood lined it on either side. Putting aside the flames, which would easily reach across, we knew that it would be impossible to bear the volumes

SURROUNDED BY FIRE.

of smoke in which we would find ourselves enveloped. While discussing our unpleasant position we kept close to the *animals*, who were beginning to evince signs of terror. Several loose horses and some small herds of cattle galloped past us, seeking security in headlong flight, and a Kaffir rushed wildly by, pointing towards some kraals which he desired to reach before the fire should overtake them.

It certainly was a magnificent sight; the contrast of the blackness around, lit up by the dancing flames; while the Drakensberg loomed mysteriously above, like some enormous ghost, overshadowing the valley below in its approaching shade. The brushwood on the other side of the spruit had caught fire, and the blaze and roar of its destruction made us tremble for the fate of our own surroundings; but just as it began to assume most threatening proportions, the wind came well round in our favour, and we felt that our position was now one of security. Away dashed the fire, carrying all before it, and, as it seemed to us, pointing for the 15th Hussars' camp; in a few seconds it extended quite a quarter of a mile away, though the tail end still crackled and roared in close proximity to our tents. Suddenly shouts and yells resounded all around; in the

flames of the distant fire appeared hundreds of figures, apparently wildly dancing and flourishing all sorts of things above their heads. They seemed to all appearance to be so many devils, and the red glare of the fire and lurid flames lit them up into many strange and fantastic shapes. While I was wondering if I was dreaming, and was really transported to Hades, a few British hurrahs explained the whole matter. The strange creatures in question were nothing more nor less than the soldiers of the 15th Hussars and 60th, well armed with sacks, who were endeavouring to extinguish some parts of the fire, and turn it from its course and away from their camps. Long and unwearyingly they worked at this task, until the flames, creeping up one of the mountains away to the southward, told them that the danger was past, and the destructive element had wandered onwards, seeking whom else it might devour.

A night of extreme discomfort for us followed the excitement of the fire. It was too dark to make any attempt to pitch the tents again, and we were forced to roll ourselves in our blankets, and seek what shelter we could in the long grass. The wind, blowing with terrific violence off the upper Veldt, enveloped us in dust, which came

along in clouds of such force and thickness that we were soon half-buried and nearly suffocated. We were all very wretched, and never was daylight longed for so ardently. When its slow dawn broke at length, we were up, and busy collecting together the *débris* of the day before's turmoil. Begrimed and black as ink, we were more like chimney sweeps than anything else, and a Kaffir passing at the time might have been excused for mistaking us for half-castes of his kind. When the waggon arrived from the other camp to convey our things across to it, we lost no time in loading up, and forsook our old quarters without a sigh of regret. In a grassy, pleasant little valley we took up our fresh abode, finding a more effective shelter from the winds in the high bank, beneath which we pitched our tents ; but it was not till late that afternoon that we were able to arrange the camp in its old form, and restore ourselves to comfort and cleanliness.

In our mountain home the days flew quickly by. They were varied by expeditions after wild duck, long rides, and late dinners: One night we rode into Fort Amiel, a distance of about fifteen miles, to dine with Sir Evelyn Wood, and the following day extended the distance by accepting the hospitality of Sir Hercules Robinson at

Hilldrop Farm. This gave us quite twenty miles going and returning, a distance which in civilised England would hardly be looked upon as in dining distance! Of course we lost our way a good many times in the dark, and, wandering about the Veldt, found ourselves first in one bog, then in another, until despair of ever striking on the right direction would seize us. But such hardships were of slight moment, for were not the reward of a good dinner and the luxury of a real house and its comforts awaiting us? Poor Sir Hercules Robinson! he did not call them comforts,—what to us was luxury was to him the reverse. In his journey later on to Pretoria, when he found himself in a tent, he, however, recalled the Hilldrop Farm with longing, and bitterly began to taste of a fresh, and, to him, unwelcome experience.

One night in the Drakensberg we were honoured by the company of Sir Evelyn Wood and General Buller, who arrived with their aides-de-camp in time for dinner. Invited to meet the generals were Colonel Luck, commanding the 15th Hussars, and several other officers. The entertainment was quite a success, and the cooking did credit to my husband, who combined the two positions of host and *chef de cuisine*. A

very merry evening was pleasantly spent, and the moon was high up in the heavens before the company took their departure. General Buller afterwards informed me that in the homeward ride to Fort Amiel he was the only one of the party who did not come to grief in a donga or spruit or bog, which I thought exceptionally lucky, it being no easy matter to navigate the treacherous Veldt even by the light of a bright moon.

Orders had been issued to the 15th Hussars for two troops to hold themselves in readiness to form part of an escort for the 94th Regiment in its march through the Transvaal to occupy Potchefstroom. We had determined to accompany the expedition, and were busily preparing for the start. One of the troops chosen was that commanded by my cousin, which we thought very opportune and lucky, going on the principle of the more friends the merrier. A change of camp from the Drakensberg to Bennett's Drift, some miles nearer Newcastle, ran us into a busy day, and gave us a kind of insight into the daily life before us during our march up country. Plenty of hard work and some little fatigue; but a day busily employed is never ill spent, and we were glad to think that the monotony of inaction was soon to be replaced by bustle and activity.

CHAPTER IX.

DEPARTURE FOR POTCHEFSTROOM — AN INCAUTIOUS OFFER —
ENGLISH PRESTIGE—FIRST COME, FIRST SERVED—A HOT
DISCUSSION.

WHAT a day was that on which the start for Potchefstroom took place! As I opened my eyes on the morning in question, it was upon a scene of unusual bustle and activity; and, though a very early hour, I somehow or other felt that I had overslept myself. Not so, however; and I soon found there was plenty of time to spare, and that I need not hurry. An hour later, nevertheless, we were standing on the ruins of our little home, and half-a-dozen busy hands were engaged in loading our mule waggon, which had rattled up a few minutes before. What a load we appeared to have! and yet our possessions were not great; but the waggons of this country are not so large as they might be, and a few articles soon assume imposing proportions when hoisted aloft. There had been a good many scares in the

officers' quarters as to the amount of luggage that would be allowed to each, and in discussing the matter I had volunteered to take anything which they could not find room for. This offer was made in all the conscious pride of knowledge that I had a mule waggon to myself; but now, as I watched it gradually filling with my own property, I had, I confess, secret misgivings as to where that of others could be stowed. Fortunately, on reaching the other camp, I found that every one had managed to his satisfaction, and that the assistance of my conveyance would not be required. This was lucky.

A hot breakfast awaited us in the mess tent of the 15th; so, starting our waggon on to join the regimental ones, we remained behind to indulge in the good fare. It felt just like a parting, and I could hardly realise that six weeks or a couple of months would probably see us back in our old haunts, with Potchefstroom in the background—a dream of the past. But for the present the future could only be guessed at: the General commanding carried sealed orders; we knew not what a day might bring forth; and many rumours floated here and there of the Boers and of their intentions. By some it was thought we should be attacked on our passage through the Transvaal, and a Boer

gentleman was in consequence chartered to precede the troops, and avert any rising which his countrymen might see fit to stir up. For a long time there appeared to be a doubt whether the guns taken at Potchefstroom would be given up; they were claimed by the English Government, and very unwillingly released by the Boer. We afterwards learned that if they had not met us at Standerton on our way up country, troops from this place would have fallen back on Lange's Nek and seized it. These were the instructions contained in sealed orders, and would have been rigidly adhered to, for there was not a soldier who did not desire to be "up and at them" once more.

Breakfast finished, our two favourite ponies, Nancy and Punch, were brought up, and we bade farewell to the hospitable colonel and the officers of the 15th, who had assembled to see us off. In the distance we could hear the sound of many wheels, the shouts of men, the whir and crack of the waggon whip; while a cloud of dust rose thickly aloft, indicating the line along which the troops of her Majesty were passing on their road to glory and victory in their triumphant march through the Transvaal. Was there a man in all that throng who did not despise the mission on

which he was engaged? Was there a breast which harboured aught but disdain and disgust for those who condemned them to figure in proceedings so ludicrous and humiliating? I think that, in vouching that there was not, I bring the true state of matters most clearly before those in whose breast may lurk a doubt as to the feeling of the army in general in South Africa on the proceedings of her Majesty's Government. Will a great wave some day mercifully sweep across the page of history, obliterating the stain which defaces the story of the doings of Old England? Let us hope so. Ten minutes' ride brought us in sight of the whole convoy of waggons, amidst which, some way ahead, we could distinguish our own. We had to descend a steep hill, and ascend a precipitous incline farther on, which told severely on the powers of the mules. The troops had halted at the bottom of the hill to give time to the long straggling convoy to make up a bit of its way: it extended in a line of over three miles, and this did not include the ox waggons of the commissariat, which generally preceded the troops by some hours—a strange sight and a novel one to onlookers who, like myself, witnessed these scenes for the first time. At the precipitous hill I have already mentioned many a waggon jammed and

stuck fast. What yells resounded ! what whirring and cracking of whips was the result ! At one time I really thought I must have departed to another world, so unearthly were the cries of the black drivers as they struggled with their mules. Many of these latter were newly imported from America, and this kind of work was new to them. The greater part declined to face their collars ; and had it not been for the timely assistance of the soldiers, batches of whom were told off to assist in getting the waggons up, I verily believe that the whole convoy would have suddenly given way, and that an end of all things would have resulted. While waiting for our own waggon to reach the top, I rode to a farmhouse close by to examine it. It proved to be the ruins of one dismantled and burnt by our soldiers during the late war, in retaliation for some offence and depredation committed by the enemy. The situation was a pretty one, and the unusual sight of a few trees surrounding the house gave it a cosy appearance ; but no attempts had been made at restoration—the owner was probably dead, or had emigrated to the Transvaal.

As soon as we spied our waggon safely perched on the sky line above, we hastened to rejoin it ; and in consequence of the light weight it carried

we soon managed to out-distance the remainder, and made along at a good pace for the Ingogo River, which we crossed, outspanning in front of Mr. Fermeston's hotel, to rest and feed the mules. When the column arrived we had already refreshed ourselves, and got rid of the dust in which our quick passage through the lines had enveloped us. It was lucky we had done so, as the call on Mr. Fermeston's supplies was such that before long a bag of gold could not have bought a piece of bread, while eggs, butter, and other good things of this world, could only be looked back upon with regret that, having been, they no longer existed, save in the longings of the unfortunates who arrived too late to partake of them. As the outspan was only for two hours, the whole thing was a sort of scramble. When the time arrived to continue the journey, our drivers declared that the mules could be found nowhere. A great deal of time passed before they were at length discovered, and the column was well on its way up the long steep hill leading to Mount Prospect before we could get inspanned and make a start of it. Then to our mortification we found that our mules were all in very poor condition, and out of a span of eight, five only made any pretence of pulling. The double exertion sustained thereby

served to knock the remainder up very speedily, and nearly four hours were spent in covering a distance of two miles and a half. On reaching the summit we learned that the column was encamped some five miles farther on, at the base of Lange's Nek ; and as the road was of a very severe character, and it was getting dark, we wisely decided to remain at Greville's hotel for the night, in order to give the mules a good rest and feed. As the next day was to be one of rest, we knew that we could easily rejoin the troops in the morning, as the march would be a short one. The stable accommodation was not of the best, but I managed to secure a snug corner, into which I put the horses and mules ; and within a short time after our arrival I was gratified to find them all eating heartily, and making a good meal off oats, hay, and Indian corn. While watching them I was somewhat surprised to see a mule-driver lead in six fat, well-to-do mules, and proceed to eject mine. As soon as my astonishment had in a measure subsided, I made a dash for the man, and angrily inquired what he was about. In very broken English he replied that he was making room for President Brand's mules.

"What do I care whose mules they are ?" I answered ; "mine are not to be moved from here."

"But dese are de President's," gasped the Kaffir, gazing at me in astonishment.

"Well, and if they are, what of that?" said I, defiantly; "mine are as good as the President's any day; so make off at once and find room elsewhere."

A smile stole over the Kaffir's face as he heard me compare his well-fed, sleek, and pampered mules to my thin, wretched-looking animals. The comparison was doubtless hastily made, and in the heat of dispute; as I made the assertion I felt that the strictest truth was not being adhered to, and I could hardly keep from laughing myself. How the matter would have ended I do not know, had not President Brand at this juncture made his appearance, and ordered his man forthwith to obey me. The Free State mules were relegated to other quarters, and my poor tired animals left in peace.

A somewhat mixed society congregated that night round the family board, and before we had been many minutes at table a hot discussion had arisen on the subject of the Boer War. President Brand found many assailants, and when at a loss for a reply warded off the attack by pious ejaculations. Far into the night the arguments were prolonged, and waking about two o'clock I could still hear the murmur of voices, the clink of

glasses; while the odour of inferior tobacco would penetrate beneath the door, obliging me to throw open my window in order to freshen and air the room.

We started off at an early hour the next morning to rejoin the column, and passing along under the shadows of the Inquela and Majuba Mountains, we at length came upon the whole force encamped at the foot of Lange's Nek. As soon as our tents were pitched we went up to the mess tent of the Inniskillings and got some breakfast, the rest of the day being spent busily enough. That night we became the guests of the Inniskillings and 15th Hussars once more, who jointly gave a banquet, at which were present General Buller and his aide-de-camp Captain Browne. As I walked back after dinner to my tents the moon was shining brightly, lighting up the dark, solid mass of the Amajuba Mountain, and flashing its rays on the white, streaked road, which gleamed out like a bar of silver over the Nek. Under the shadow of these scenes of regretful memory slept the soldiers of England. Did they in their dreams behold the faces of their dead comrades, sleeping their last long sleep in the arms of that fatal mountain, where so many lives were sacrificed but a short time before in vain?

CHAPTER X.

EARLY RISING — BLOBS — A WEARY MARCH — A RASH
ATTEMPT—AN ANXIOUS MOMENT—A HOT CORNER.

THE *reveille* woke me next morning to a sense of what we must daily expect, and I sprang up with the full determination not to be late. The first thing to be done was to rouse my servant and the sleepy Kaffirs, to whom this early rising was most distasteful; and having dressed by artificial light,—for the sun had not yet risen,—I made my way out of my tent, dragging after me my bedding, which had to be shaken out, neatly folded, and rolled up in its waterproof sheet. Then everything about the camp had to be collected and packed together, and laid in a line, in readiness for loading up the waggon. Tom had by this time got a kettle full of water to boil, in which he made some excellent cocoa, which, with a piece of bread or a biscuit, formed our morning meal. The difficulty of the morning was to get my husband to arise, the most

efficacious method being to begin striking the tent in which he lay; and so soon as he felt the sides flapping against him, in self-defence, and doubtless because his common sense would tell him that further sleep was impossible, a struggling movement and a few muttered ejaculations would signify to his tormentors outside that their efforts had proved successful. The next thing to be done was to saddle the horses and tie the spare ones to the back of the waggon, pulling up the line to which they had been attached; and having completed striking the tents, the Kaffirs were ordered to inspan their mules, and the process of loading up commenced. A few days' experience of this kind of work taught us to leave all the heavier articles in the waggon, such as coals, forage, and tinned stores, for on the morning in question they proved very heavy lifting. I had succeeded the day before, on my arrival in camp, in procuring a fresh mule waggon, and an excellent span of ten mules, with which we anticipated getting quickly over the ground. The whole turnout presented a decidedly better appearance than the sorry vehicle and span of the day before, and such good haste had we made, that though a few commissariat ox waggons got off before us, we were the first of the mule division to which we

belonged to make a start of it. The pull up the steep hill leading to the Nek was somewhat heavy, and the cold blast that met us on gaining the top proved anything but pleasant. However, a good deal of down-hill work was now before us in our descent towards the Transvaal, and the drivers and mules seemed to appreciate the easy bit of road on which they found themselves as they rattled along at a famous pace.

We passed the water-cart a mile or so on the road, with one of its four mules lying on the ground. The poor beast had been seized with sickness but a few minutes before we arrived, and now the thick foam had gathered round its lips; its eye was already glazing, and the last long-drawn respirations were coming to an end. In a few minutes life and its sorrows would be over. In watching the poor beast we had allowed several minutes to slip away, and on turning to look for our waggon perceived in the far distance a cloud of dust, which told us where it was. The departure of the waggon caused the acutest sorrow to a little black-and-tan dog which I had brought with me from England, and which, although three years old, still went by the name of "Puppy." He had other names, one of which was Blobbs; but Puppy was the usual term applied in speaking of

or to this extraordinary little personage. Better runner and stayer never existed, and I have seen him do sixty or seventy miles in a day without showing fatigue, and after a good night's rest evince all the keenness of his elastic nature to be up and on again. On this occasion, as I have already remarked, the disappearance of the waggon caused him a great deal of unhappiness. After giving vent to several prolonged howls, he started off at full speed to rejoin it, and we thought no more about him; but a few minutes later a small cloud of dust advancing towards us made us look out for a hare, as we thought it probably might prove to be, and we were much surprised to behold Puppy's dusty little figure appear instead, his tongue lolling out a long way from his mouth, and his whole appearance denoting the speed with which he had come. We used to calculate that in a day's march he always did double distance at least.

It was not long before we came upon the Coldstream River,—that which marks the Natal boundary from the Transvaal. A long row of outspanned commissariat waggons pointed out the place where the troops would outspan and off-saddle for breakfast; so, drawing up our waggon on Transvaal ground, we released the mules and horses for a short graze. By the time the column

came up we had almost finished our meal, and had begun to think about getting on our way once more. General Buller's waggon had passed us, so we knew that we should be pretty safe in pitching our camp in the right place if we followed it, and took up our quarters close by. We had a good long distance to go before we reached the General's camp and got our own pitched. We found him at luncheon, and being very hungry I was not sorry to avail myself of the invitation which he at once gave us to join in. Refreshed and invigorated, we returned to our own quarters, where my husband set to work to prepare the soup and dinner for that night; and having finished my own duties, I was able to indulge in a hot bath, the luxury of which can be only duly appreciated after a day spent amidst clouds of dust, for the wind had been blowing with great force. It was late that afternoon before the column hove in sight. It had been a weary march both for man and beast; and the long line of waggons continued to rumble and rattle into camp long after the sun had gone down. The foot soldiers—two companies of the 94th—and a few artillerymen limped in, very footsore and weary. Poor fellows! Many of the former were mere boys, and appeared in no way fitted for the hardships

of a long day's march under a hot sun, with the wind blowing clouds of dust into their faces. Many of them too would have but short time for any proper repose, as, for instance, those chosen for picket duty, who would have to fall into their posts around the camp. This precaution was necessary, for were we not travelling through a hostile country, infested with Boers? Vain farce! What havoc and confusion could not fifty Boers have made in those long, straggling lines of waggons, without which the British soldier cannot march! (?) On the night in question a careless cook of the Inniskillings set fire to the grass around the spot he had chosen for culinary purposes. In a second the Veldt was blazing fiercely, and some hundred men of that regiment had to be despatched to beat out the flames. For over two hours they laboured at it in vain; the fire crept up some hills on the left, and defied their every effort to extinguish it. For a long time a village of kraals was placed in terrible jeopardy; but the efforts of the natives themselves, assisted by the soldiers, managed to turn the devastating element from its destructive course; and the wind coming to their help drove it away over vast tracts of land to the eastward, which in a short time became barren, burnt-up wastes.

We had some rough ground to get over the next day, and the first obstacle presented itself not a hundred yards from camp. A deep, boggy spruit had to be crossed; the mud was thick, deep, and tenacious, and the holding on the other side anything but good. As bad luck would have it, we had followed some waggons which had taken the worse of two roads converging towards the same point, and although we got safely through the first spruit mentioned above, there lay ahead, unwittingly unknown to us, a very untempting bottom. The first to try it were ourselves, the mule waggons of the commissariat being drawn up in line on the bank, and our movements were watched with anxiety and expectation. Putting their heads boldly at the place, Josef, our driver, aided by Ridley, who carried the whip and was the more important of the two, gave vent to the most unearthly shrieks that it has been my lot ever to have heard, and, answering to the weird summons, the mules made a dash forward, and were soon over their shoulders in mud and mire. Through this they gamely struggled, and themselves reached the opposite bank in safety; but a span of ten mules extends over a good bit of ground, and as they attacked a steep hill on the other side, the waggon, with its four hinder-

most mules, was still in the deep, muddy bottom. It was in vain that the poor beasts bent their necks well into their collars and struggled to make further way; every effort was unavailing, and the waggon, coming suddenly into contact with a large rock at the bottom, stuck fast. The commissariat, finding the way barred, made a similar attempt a little farther down; but the same hill which had made pulling so difficult for our mules proved their enemy also, and their waggon likewise stuck fast. The one in the rear sent their mules to assist in getting them out of their dilemma, but twenty animals were as powerless to move the lumbering vehicle as one span had been. As for us, after long and useless urging, we outspanned our mules, and, inspanning them to the back of the waggon, pulled it out on the side we had before quitted. A conductor at this moment came up and volunteered to show us another place, over which, with very careful and accurate driving, he thought we might manage to get across. With renewed hope we followed him round to the spot in question, but the aspect of the drift did not reassure us. Here the mud was deeper and more treacherously sticky than ever; but as there was nothing for it but to try, we called to Josef and Ridley to send them at it. As the mules entered the water I held my

breath, and watched the proceeding with the greatest excitement. For a few seconds they seemed to have good, fair footing, and I began to breathe, when suddenly the two foremost mules disappeared, and the remainder, unable to stop, followed suit, and for a few seconds nothing could be seen but a swirling of the water, a hoof or two, and a struggling mass of drowning animals. To get at them was impossible, and we were obliged to leave them to their own devices, our consternation getting the best of us. Not so with the mules, for these sagacious animals managed to get their heads above water after a good deal of struggling, and, blowing their nostrils like so many hippopotami, calmly awaited any assistance which we might be able to afford them. For over three-quarters of an hour they remained in this uncomfortable position, when several of the commissariat mules, which had received help from some oxen, and got their waggons over, were sent to our assistance. By sinking himself deep in the water, one of the men managed to feel the hook in front of the foremost of our span, and to this he attached the mules on the bank. Then half a dozen whips were set going at once—everybody shouted and yelled—dogs barked and howled—and a donkey hard by began to bray.

What a scene it was! Full of anxiety as I was for the fate of our mules and waggon, I could not for the life of me help laughing, and when our mules began to show their entangled and rat-like bodies as they were drawn out two by two on to the bank with the waggon following behind, the scene was indeed ludicrous in the extreme. However, we were very thankful that everything had ended so luckily, and, with many willing hands to help, we soon had the harness disentangled, and the animals inspanned once more. They appeared none the worse for their long soaking,—a mule is a very stolid animal, and not easily put about,—and we set forward merrily again as if nothing had happened.

A few miles farther on we came upon the troops off-saddled for breakfast—an example which we did not follow; and General Buller's waggon coming up at that moment, we went straight on for our final encampment that night. This was at Franklin's Store, by the Parde Kop, and we found a charming little spring just suited to our wants, where we soon had a comfortable and cosy little camp laid out, with the commissariat—important article!—not fifty or sixty yards away.

The butcher of that corps shot his ox that

night just behind our tents. The first shot missed, and passed in closer proximity to where I was standing than I exactly liked. I hastened to take refuge in my tent, forgetting the fact that canvas was not exactly bullet-proof; but no matter—it was the story over again of the ostrich hiding its head and thinking itself safe from detection! It was a matter of wonder to me how no accident occurred in these daily butcheries. A small head of oxen are driven up by a Kaffir, who has charge of them, and the butcher picks his beast with very little regard as to what lies behind it. Ping goes the bullet. If it hits the exact centre of the forehead above the eyes, the animal falls at once; but an inch too much to the right or the left seems very little to affect the beast, and fails to kill. One of these oxen galloped by me one day, his face streaming with blood, and the foam rushing from his mouth. Three times had he been shot at, and unsuccessfully hit; and the poor brute, maddened by pain and rage, had escaped from his would-be executioners and taken refuge in flight. He was, however, captured and brought back, when a fourth bullet ended his sufferings. As a rule, however, I was told our butcher did for them at the first shot, and the task—a by no means easy one—was always very efficiently executed.

On the night in question we dined with General Buller, who gave us a very choice little dinner and some excellent champagne. With such delicacies doubtless my readers will think we had not many hardships to endure. Hardships! No; such things were unknown; we had some rough work sometimes, but hardship never showed its grim features during our march through the Transvaal. It was a land of milk and honey—or rather, I should say of eggs.

In the middle of the night I was awakened by a confused medley of tongues, all talking together. Angry voices were raised in dispute, and a great deal of menace and brag seemed to be going on. The noise and dispute lasted some time, and was caused, I afterwards learned, by an altercation which had arisen between two conductors, both probably the worse for drink. One man had tried to stab the other, who had thereupon knocked his teeth down his throat. They were still quarrelling when I fell asleep.

CHAPTER XI.

THE MONOTONY OF TREKKING — A TRIUMPHANT ENTRY —
PLAYING AT SOLDIERS — DISAPPOINTMENT — AN EXCITING
RIDE — THE LAWS OF SPORT.

A FEW days on the march soon wearied us with their dry monotony. We were riding through a country whose resources of amusement were small, and the unceasing roll of the treeless Veldt was dry and uninteresting in the extreme. Some of the officers would spend their spare time after springbôk and blesbôk, making thereby a pleasant addition to the pot, and a change in the everyday diet of hard ox-trek or stringy mutton; but the sport to be found in securing these animals was not very exciting, and gun shooting appeared to be the favourite pastime. Snipe could occasionally be found in abundance, and the corān and pow frequently showed themselves in fair numbers, the former proving an especially delicious dish. The corān might be termed the grouse of South Africa, which they resemble in

size, though in plumage and shape they are more like our common green plover in England. The cock bird rises, like the grouse, with a hoarse cackle that brings home to the listener vivid recollections of Scotland and its moors, whereon dwells that unrivalled bird ; but its flight is slower, and it settles quicker than the other, and is not such good shooting. However, by us all it was an eagerly-sought-for and welcome bird, and no one was slow to appreciate the delicacy of flavour which the gourmets at once proclaimed it to possess. Pow constituted a more noble dish, being of the bustard species and as large as a turkey ; it was, I think, universally appreciated, though I cannot say that I shared that taste, the flesh of the bird appearing to me to possess a strong flavour, which I did not like. It was not often that we were fortunate enough to get a hare, and hare-soup was in consequence not a frequent occurrence. But on the few occasions when we proved lucky in that way, there were great rejoicings, and proportionate invitations sent out to different tents to one's friends to come and partake of the delicacy. Such invitations seldom found any refusal. Altogether these Veldt banquets were quite in vogue, and decidedly the pleasantest part of the day. Whist would follow,

and late hours proved the result, so that the sound of the half-past five *reveille* was not always welcomed with such joy as it should have been by the drowsy ears that it awoke to hearing.

On Thursday, 2nd of June, we marched into Standerton. This announcement sounds grand, and my reader is thereby probably deeply impressed with the size and importance of the place. What a deal we read of the size of Standerton! and I had so often heard of the place that I had pictured it to myself in a very different light to what I at length beheld when I came in sight of this famous town. A few stores, and two or three stone buildings, looking painfully new, were all that met the eye; while across the river, on a barren, dusty-looking hill, were pitched the tents of the regiments who had garrisoned the fort during the war. The only refreshing object that showed itself in or around this dreary-looking hole was the river Vaal, into whose deep, clear waters the thirsty mules and horses buried their dusty nostrils, drinking long and eagerly of the delicious draught. Beyond some muddy pools, we had been very short of water that day; and as the horses had been very inefficiently watered in consequence, their delight may be well imagined when they came in sight of the Vaal.

On a dreary, dusty, dried-up corner of this barren waste we once more pitched our tents close to the General's. It was a spot which had no recommendation, inasmuch as it was a long way distant from the commissariat, still farther from the troops, and a great distance removed from the river. True, a muddy pool lay not far off, which, even the horses and mules, who wandered about disconsolately, looking for grass and water, refused to look at; while the cheerful view of three graves immediately facing our tents was all that presented itself to distract the wandering gaze.

Several empty waggons had been left along with the column to pick up the footsore and weary soldiers, and many were the footsore and weary men whom they did pick up. A great deal has been said and written about the efficiency of the army; and it seems to me a good deal of fuss and expense is incurred in the altering of uniforms and changing of bonnets, and I wot not how many other useless reforms. Would it not be better to think about the stuff these men are made of before so much detail is gone into about their dress? We want men, proved and tried, to bring honour and prestige to England's dying name; we want bone, stamina, and muscle to fight

her battles for her, and stay the long race out. What have we done to allow weeds and weaklings to don the uniform which should carry honour and victory before it, and to whom we trust the settlement of our quarrels with certainty and confidence? Can we run a yearling in the Derby, and expect him to win and bring our colours triumphantly to the front? I think not; it is the same with man as with the beast. If we give boys men's work to do, disaster will ever befall us, which all the linking of regiments, changing of names, and abolishing of good old customs, will neither patch nor mend. In the afternoon a party of us, consisting of several officers of the 15th Hussars and Inniskillings, rode up to the fort to inspect the two little guns taken by the Boers at Potchefstroom, and which had been brought into Standerton and delivered up to the officer in command a few days before our arrival. We had heard a good deal about these guns, and examined them with no little interest, for had they not afforded help to the gallant little garrison of Potchefstroom, whose deeds illumine the few bright pages which occur in the story of the Boer War? The Boer who had brought them in is said to have demanded £200 for so doing. I never heard whether this

request was submitted to the home authorities, and refused or granted; but if it was I should imagine the old principle of giving in to the Dutchmen was in this case as usual adhered to. The big fort at Standerton was duly inspected, as well as the smaller ones scattered about in different directions; but as the fighting which had taken place in these parts during the war had chiefly been at long range, they were spots which, I fear, did not interest us so much as perhaps they should have done. More to our taste was the inspection of the few stores in the town, and some money was here laid out to advantage in the purchase of many useful articles, whereby we replenished our diminished store of eatables and luxuries, such as jams, potted meats, tinned vegetables, coffee, chocolate, and milk. One storekeeper was found to possess several barrels of Golden Cape Sherry, which were quickly secured and relegated to the mess stores,—one barrel, regardless of expense, finding its way into the bell tent, in which all our own private treasures were secreted. Altogether we took care to seize the last opportunity which lay before us of making ourselves comfortable during the remainder of the march to Potchefstroom.

Military plans now began to eke out. The

company of the 94th which had marched up from Newcastle was ordered to remain at Standerton; another company of the same regiment being told off to get itself in readiness to take the former's place. A troop of cavalry was also under orders to remain behind; and although we had with us four Inniskilling troops and only two of the 15th Hussars, it was decided by Colonel Curtis of the Inniskillings, who commanded the column, to leave one of the latter. As bad luck would have it, this troop was commanded by my cousin, whose chagrin and disappointment was great on finding he would not be one of the party to visit Potchefstroom. The prospect of three weeks' or a month's sojourn in so dreary a locality as Standerton was certainly not pleasing, and we commiserated his fate very much, and endeavoured by every means in our power to soften the severity of his disappointment. But all efforts were unavailing, and looking round on the dreary scene which everywhere presented itself, we felt how useless must be all human comfort.

On the march next day we saw large herds of blesbôk in every direction. In the hopes of getting a shot General Buller started off on a fast-galloping pony, followed by his servant carrying the rifle. The last thing we saw of him was

his figure disappearing over the sky line, with the herd he was after in full flight in front of him. While riding along I came across a trek-ox but recently dead. On and around his carcase were congregated thousands of asvögels or vultures. These immense and disgusting looking animals treated me with supreme contempt as I rode in amidst them cracking my whip, those who had gorged themselves merely waddling heavily on one side, while the more empty ones rose lazily a few feet from the ground, and flapped along to secure posts of observation a very little distance removed from their prey. Calling Blobbs, I sent him at them; but their numbers confused him, and no sooner had he driven one away and returned to assault a second, than his former enemy would return and take up a position of still greater proximity to the dead ox. The large herds of blesbôk seemed to increase in number as we rode along. One especially which I noticed must have numbered three thousand strong at the least, and showed a very bold front. It was moving about a quarter of a mile away in front of us, and the leading bulls were making for a point which would force them to cross the line of road up which we were advancing. The horse on which I was mounted happened to be my best

and fleetest, so, starting him at a gallop, and regardless of holes or ant-bear heaps, which in the excitement of the race I quite overlooked, I pointed his head towards that part of the Veldt for which they seemed to be making. Catching sight of me at once, the leaders of the herd broke into a trot, and in a few seconds later they were going their fastest, but never once offering to whirl round and make for any other point than that towards which they had first turned their heads. To ride a single blesbôk down unwounded on a horse is an impossibility, but it is different with a herd whose movements are hampered by numbers, and the pace in consequence is much slower. I doubt very much, however, whether it would be possible to catch a herd up if one started in pursuit behind it,—I do not think so; but as I have never tried, I will not venture to express any further opinion in the matter.

The leaders of the flying blesbôks had already passed the point to which I was pressing forward; but there were many to follow, and the battle that had to be decided was, whether I could succeed in turning half the herd from its course, or whether, in spite of the very object from which they were flying, they would still press steadily on in the wake of their companions. As I neared the herd

I could see their bright eyes glancing with terror, their heads thrown back, and their whole speed put forward to pass me before I could reach them. But their numbers were too many, and, amidst a cloud of dust, a trampling of feet, and a general scurry, I found myself suddenly in the midst of them. Quick as lightning my horse brought his head round in the same direction as the blesbòks were moving, otherwise I believe the pressure of numbers would have carried him off his legs. What a chance mine would have been had I carried gun, rifle, or revolver: there would have been no lack of butcher's meat had I so willed it. But to observe, not to kill, was my object; and, probably no one has ever had a better chance than on this occasion, and during that stirring gallop I had to take good stock of animals which, up till then, I had only seen dead, or moving at a distance. How I longed for some of these graceful animals, as I galloped in their midst, to ornament the park at home.

Though my horse was, as I have said, a fast one, he lost ground very quickly, as the great herd flashed by him at full speed, and before long the last blesbòk wheeled and darted by me, and I was left behind to watch the great black mass move onwards. In the days when countless thousands

roamed at will over these plains, the sight must have been one of wonder. But that the sport could have been good I deny, for the stalk is the only pleasurable and legitimate manner in which man can approach the wild denizens of any country, be it forest, prairie, or veldt. On the hills of Scotland, on the prairies or pampas of America, or on the plains of Africa, it is all the same. Without that law in which skill is required, what true sportsman cares for the mere fact of killing? The bleaching skulls of innumerable wildebeeste heads strewed the Veldt in every direction, showing where once vast numbers of these grand buffalo-like antelopes had roamed. A few were still to be seen, but the great herds, of which doubtless they once formed a part, have wandered onwards, seeking refuge from advancing civilisation, and penetrating further into distant countries as yet so much unexplored. Their flight is vain—whither they have penetrated, thither will man follow them; it is but a question of time. . . . My horse being very hot, I walked him back quietly to the waggon road, and as soon as the others came up called a halt to change my saddle on to a fresh pony. We then got our rifles out, and passed the rest of that day's march pleasantly enough in stalking small herds of blesbòks, and

making fancy shots at flying beasts well out of range. Needless to say that we in consequence made no bag; but General Buller, coming up as we were pitching our tents by Bushman's River that afternoon, showed us a fine fat blesbôk which he had managed to stalk and secure. Some of it transferred to the pot made us a very excellent dinner that night, and we drank the health of the successful stalker and provider of that day's dinner in a glass each of the Golden Cape Sherry, the cask containing it being tapped in honour of the occasion. The further announcement that a halt would be called on the morrow to rest the men and give them an opportunity to wash their things, was received with general satisfaction, and couches were sought that night with the pleasant feeling that no half-past five *reveillé* would disturb the slumbers of the brave.

CHAPTER XII.

A GENERAL HOLIDAY — A BAD SHOT — AN INNOCENT ENJOYMENT — AN ALARM — HEIDELBERG — A BOER LEADER — KLIP RIVER.

LEAVE had been given to nearly all the officers and a great many of the men to go out shooting. This permission very few seemed inclined to neglect, and small parties of twos and threes might have been seen leaving the camp all the morning. General Buller started off with his servant to look for wildebeeste, which rumour asserted had been seen the day before, and his aide-de-camp Captain Browne departed in an opposite direction; the ambition of this latter not soaring so high as that of his chief, he professed himself contented if he could secure a blesbôk. With such numbers of sportsmen anxious to get a shot, the anticipations of sport were not very brilliant; we, however, fell into the general snare, and, more to pass the time than anything else, a party of three of us, taking with us our rifles, rode

forth to see what luck would befall our fortunes. For some time we rode without seeing anything, the frequent report of guns and rifles sounding in our ears. A heavy mirage trembled and glittered around, turning rocks into living shapes, and deceiving us with its innumerable lakes, covered with wild-fowl. So often were we misled by these glittering deceptions, that when at length we did suddenly come upon some antelope, we for several minutes doubted our own sight. Then away went Mr. Holland and my husband galloping to encircle them, while I rode quietly on to the brow of a little hill that lay ahead, hoping to come upon a herd of blesbôk. My hopes were verified; not fifty yards in front of where I stood some springbôk, with swift, graceful bounds, placed distance and safety between my rifle and themselves, disturbing in their flight a small herd of two or three hundred of the antelope, for which I was searching. A herd it evidently was which had been already startled, for, without pausing to give the customary stare of inquiry and curiosity, the whole lot set off at full speed in search of a more secure spot. After them at full gallop went I, and as soon as I had made out the point for which they were making I altered my course, and made towards it also in a crosswise direction. But quick as went

my horse, so quickly went the blesbòks. By the time I had reached the spot towards which I had been making, nearly the whole herd had passed at a distance of over 150 yards, and I had only time to slip from my horse, throw the bridle over my arm, and, with trembling, unsteady hand, take aim at one of the tail-end bulls. The weapon that I carried was a twelve repeating Winchester, loaded with six or seven rounds. My first shot struck the ground close to the animal I had aimed at, and I found that I had sighted too low; quickly repairing the error, my second shot was more successful, but as the animal was going away from me at the time I only managed to wound him. It was with regret that I saw his leg was broken, and I hastened to remount and follow them in order to put the poor beast out of his sorrow by a more certain shot. But as ill luck would have it, the mirage closed in very thick, and in spite of every endeavour to get on the right spoor, amidst the many fresh ones which kept crossing and recrossing each other, I was entirely unsuccessful; and when I endeavoured to find my companions, having relinquished the chase in despair, I found this a by no means easy matter either. The distant report of a rifle put me a bit on the right scent;

so galloping in that direction and trusting to luck was about all I could do. Presently through the mist came a sound of voices; I shouted, and my shout was returned; in a few minutes I came upon them, dismounted and seated on the ground, awaiting me. Mr. Holland had had a shot, but, like myself, had proved unsuccessful. Soon after this the mirage cleared off, and we were able to make out in which direction our camp lay. In a valley not far distant, and along the ridge of a low hill, we could see numerous sportsmen in hot pursuit after flying herds. One horseman was engaged in riding down a wounded bôk, which, I conjectured, might be mine; and in this conjecture I was doubtless right, as one of the officers succeeded in securing one, and by his description, later in the day, of the wound and the place where he had come upon the animal, little doubt remained in my mind that it was the same beast.

The situation of affairs began soon after this to assume a ludicrous aspect. In whichever direction we looked or turned, armed men mounted and armed men on foot might be seen hurrying hither and thither in their wild search for game. One private was observed stalking a goat; another fancied he had found a peculiar kind of antelope

in a wandering sheep; but whether they slew these peaceful denizens of the Veldt or not we did not wait to see, and history has not yet divulged. One species of amusement we found much to our taste, and that was, whenever we saw a very earnest-looking sportsman in the distance, to let off our rifles and then gallop as hard as ever we could towards some imaginary object. On several occasions the ruse was successful. Up would gallop the earnest sportsman, shouting, "What is it? Where is it? Have you wounded it?" "Yes," we would reply, still galloping on, and pointing ahead of us, "don't you see it? There it goes!" and on would press our duped friend. Then suddenly we would pull up and call out to him, "Oh! we see we have made a mistake; it's only a mole hill;" and the earnest sportsman would retire discomfited amidst our mocking laughter and jeers. It was a childish pastime certainly, but it helped to keep us amused, and passed away the time pleasantly enough. Soon the Veldt began to grow a positively dangerous position; bullets were flying right and left, and as we valued our lives in a kind of way, we judged it safer to beat a retreat back to camp.

Marching was the order for the next few days, and we got over a fair amount of ground. Eggs

and chickens began to grow plentiful, and General Buller and ourselves would make foraging expeditions ahead of the troops. This was a source of great annoyance to the mess president of the Inniskillings, who complained that wherever we went we swept the board clean! That we got first choice was decidedly the case, but that we swept the board clean was a slander which we duly resented. Huge must have been the appetite that could have negotiated all the supplies which now began to grow so plentiful all along the way; and though we supplied our wants liberally, we always left enough over and above for those behind. Of the Boers we saw little; their farm-houses lay away from the waggon track, and the occupants were either too sulky or too *insouciant* to favour us with their presence. Occasionally one or two would visit the General in his camp; but this occurrence was very rare, and then the visitors in question generally consisted of loyal Boers. On the march the precaution to keep scouts on the look-out in every direction was duly observed, and on nearing a pass or nek which had the appearance of a good defence position, extra care was taken to guard against surprise. But I fear the gravity of the position could never be duly impressed upon the minds of either

officers or men. A farce they felt it to be, and a farce no doubt it was, and we treated it in our thoughts accordingly. I heard of one scare taking place, though, as I was riding some way on ahead, I did not witness it myself. It appears that a young dragoon, posted on the pinnacle of a high hill, descried in the far distance a black moving mass, which to him had doubtless the appearance of mounted men. Descending hastily from his post of observation, he came galloping back to the advancing column with the intelligence that some hundreds of mounted Boers would shortly be upon us. Instantly all was excitement and expectation; orders were given to hurry up the long straggling line of waggons which were toiling miles in the rear, only a few belonging to the commissariat, General Buller, and ourselves, being on ahead. These were not recalled; probably the officer in command thought, and rightly, that we were some distance off, and therefore proportionately safe. A reconnoitring party was next sent out to ascertain the numbers of the enemy, and returned shortly with the intelligence that the advancing mass was nothing but a large herd of cattle being driven along by two Kaffirs! . . . I have recounted this story as it was afterwards told to me by a gentleman attached to the column at the

time, and who was an eyewitness of the scene; beyond this I cannot be responsible for any unfounded assertion which I may have made on hearsay evidence alone. That the scare in question did take place I was informed by several officers was the case, but the error was detected long before the advanced and rear guards could be called up.

On Tuesday, the 7th June, we arrived on the outskirts of Heidelberg. The General decided to encamp at some five miles distance from that town, so that no opportunity might be afforded to the soldiers to get the poisonous drinks sold at all the stores. The farm on which they took up their quarters was one inhabited by a hostile Boer, who refused all kinds of friendly overtures, and declined to supply any one with chickens, milk, or eggs, which he possessed in abundance. As for ourselves, we took our waggon on, pitching our little camp about a mile outside the town, in order to be nearer fresh stores and provisions, of which we intended to lay in a stock. Our tents became the half-way house between the column and Heidelberg, the officers dropping in by twos and threes on their way to and from the town. As usual, as was the case with all these Dutch towns, I was disappointed

with Heidelberg. The memory of its grand old namesake had haunted my imagination, and I expected to find something in keeping with the place from which it derived its name. But nothing of the sort : a low range of hills, through which ran the road to Pretoria, was all that attracted the eye ; while a few scattered houses could be distinguished at its base, indicating where Heidelberg was situated.

Having pitched our tents we rode on into the town, our first invasion being the hotel. Here we managed to secure a few dozen eggs, and completed our bargain with the hotel-keeper under the admiring gaze of some half-dozen Kaffirs, and the sulky glances of an equal number of dirty-looking Boers. A great deal of singing seemed to be going on inside, and the fumes of tobacco and strong smell of that disgusting concoction, Natal rum, pervaded the air. Refusing the invitation of the landlady to come in and have some tea, I was glad to ride away from the stuffy atmosphere, and take refuge in that portion of Heidelberg dignified under the name of The Market Square. Here we found several of the Boer tents pitched, and armed men patrolling up and down on guard. Dirtier tents I have seldom seen, and the whole appearance

presented by these warriors was the reverse of cleanly.

Several boys were busily engaged in preparing a supply of food. It consisted of long strips of raw meat, cut from the most fleshy parts of the trek-ox, and attached to a line of string, which encircled the camp altogether. At a distance of a few inches apart hung these long, thin strips, presenting the appearance of so many serpents or skinned eels. They are left so suspended until the hot sun has dried them up to a hard shrivelled substance, when they are declared in an eatable state, and, under the name of biltong, constitute the principal food of the Boers. On this they thrive, and in time of war find it especially adapted to their requirements. It is light and easy to carry; few waggons corresponding to the commissariat of our army are wanted; it requires no cooking, so that fires, if undesirable, can be dispensed with; and on this the Boer can live contentedly and flourish, retaining his health and his strength in no way impaired. Such were our foes.

Cronje, the besieger of Potchefstroom, was pointed out to me, and it was with some curiosity that I looked at the man whose behaviour to the dying women and children shut up in that fort

during the siege must ever reflect shame on himself and on the bearers of his name. It was a pleasanter face to look at than I had pictured to myself; but his eyes had a bad expression, and the cunning, cruel look in them overbalanced any other redeeming points which might have been traced in his rugged features. When first pointed out to me he was stretched at full length outside one of the tents, basking in the sun, and indulging in a pipe of tobacco, lazily puffing large clouds of smoke from his lips, and evidently greatly enjoying himself. My prolonged stare partaking more of curiosity than any desire to be rude, however, appeared to discomfit him, for, with one or two grunts, much resembling those made by a pig, he shuffled on to his legs, and took refuge in one of the aforementioned dirty and greasy-looking tents. We saw a good many of our waggons which had fallen into the enemy's hands during the war still in possession of the Boers. The chief commissariat officer of our expedition vowed that he was going to claim them all, and was very anxious to consult General Buller on the subject. He might claim the waggons, but the spans of oxen,—alas! where were they? Probably long ago converted into biltong.

We were just in time to lay in another supply of new-laid eggs at one of the stores, and secure some fresh milk at three shillings a bottle, when the mess president arrived in hot haste,—as usual behind hand, and full of jealousy and reproach that we had stolen a march on him. Poor man! he was assailed with jeers and chaff, which he received good-humouredly enough, all the while grumbling and magnifying his misfortunes. Captain Beresford made a successful raid on an old lady's pet garden, and partly by threats and partly by force induced her to part with a goodly supply of fresh vegetables,—a veritable luxury, and one in which we had not indulged for many a long day. Altogether we returned from Heidelberg loaded with provisions, and followed by two Kaffirs bearing the body of a sheep just freshly killed, on one of whose legs we proposed to feast that night, ignoring our rations of trek with becoming disdain. Invitations were freely dispensed and accepted, and no happier or merrier party congregated round a festive board that night than the one in question. What matter if the plates were tin instead of silver (they were hot; and that was a great matter),—if the cups were of the same metal instead of crystal? The dinner was good, the circum-

stances were pleasant, and every one was happy and cheery ; and with all this what banquet could compare ?

The next day we left Heidelberg at an early hour, and rejoined the troops, who had been travelling over the Veldt by some cross roads, five or six miles on our way. We had but a short march before us, expecting to encamp that day in the bush country, which was something to look forward to, and we promised ourselves a good cheery blaze that night. But the wood proved very thorny and green ; the labour sustained in hacking down a single bush could find no reward ; and we were forced to return to the burning of manure, which constituted our everyday fires, and very hot ones it made too.

On the banks of the Klip River we found the prettiest camping ground of the whole march. Bushes grew down to the water's edge, and the broad stream, with its deep, clear pools and swift running water, was especially inviting. We pitched our tents in a very cosy little nook, without crossing over, which, however, the General did, and his tents faced ours on the opposite bank. The troops likewise crossed on their arrival, and it was interesting to watch the passage of the infantry. They were all very

dusty and footsore, and evidently very thirsty, to judge by the manner in which they drank long draughts of the river water previous to taking off their boots and stockings, in obedience to the command given to do so. Many of them were so tender of foot that they could not face the shingle with their bare soles, and were forced to slip into their boots again before crossing. It took some time to get them all over, and into their stockings and boots once more, by which time the sun was wellnigh down on the horizon, for we had had a long march that day. Here the General received visits from several loyal Boers, who came to find out what was going to be done with the Transvaal and themselves. They were funny-looking old gentlemen, one so hidden in a large wide hat that it was with difficulty his chin could be caught sight of. They had a long conversation, but whether it was satisfactory or not I never inquired, and when it came to an end they waddled off.

Marching forward for the next few days brought us close to our journey's end, and on Monday, the 13th of June, Loup Spruit hove in sight, where, pitching our tents that night, we congratulated ourselves on the fact that the next time we did so it would be to encamp in Potchefstroom.

CHAPTER XIII.

A COLD MORNING — POTCHEFSSTROOM — TRIUMPHAL ENTRY !
—DISGUST— THE RUINED FORT—A SORTIE—FRESH PLANS.

It froze hard during the night at Loup Spruit, and the cold was exceedingly severe. All night long I shivered and trembled and shook, cowering beneath the blankets, which seemed powerless to afford warmth ; indeed, had it not been for the protection afforded my feet by my two little dogs, I verily believe these useful appendages to man's comfort would have dropped off altogether. No sooner did the first gray streak of dawn begin to appear than I was up and prowling about outside the tent. Close by shivered and trembled the mules, their coats shining with frost, and their tails tucked between their legs in abject misery. I consoled them with a liberal supply of mealies and oats mixed up together, which they were not slow to appreciate ; and the crunching and munching which ensued put some life into the silence .

which seemed to reign all round. Then I fed the horses, and in the dim light folded and shook out my blankets, and wrapped them up in their waterproof sheet. Everything that could be collected I brought together in preparation for an early start, after which I got a fire to burn, and indulged myself with a cup of hot chocolate. This put some warmth into me, and I began to revive; at half-past five the *reveille* sounded; the distant camp began to stir; in General Buller's tent, close by, a light commenced to burn; soon his cook had an opposition fire going, and we were fairly launched into a new day.

Without waiting for his waggon, which followed with ours, the General started off as soon as dressed, with Captain Browne, to ride forward to Potchefstroom. Several matters had to be arranged before the arrival of the troops, and a suitable spot chosen for their camping-ground. Anxious also to get on ahead, we were not very long behind him, and at starting sent our horses along at a smart gallop, in order to get them and ourselves warm. By the side of the waggon track we frequently passed small bands of half-naked, shivering Kaffirs, who were huddled together on the ground, indulging in their morning's sleep. These natives were on the trek to

the Diamond Fields. They had probably performed many hundred miles on foot, and had still a long distance before them ere they reached their journey's end.

With the appearance of the sun the frost vanished, and about midday the heat became intense. Our road led through several low shady woods, for whose shelter we were very grateful, and the sight of trees once more was indeed refreshing. About one o'clock, emerging from the last of these pleasant retreats, we came in sight of Potchefstroom. "There it is," we called out to each other; and in the distance a long line of houses, nestling in weeping willows, told us that at last we had looked upon this famous town. On the outskirts we were met by Captain Browne, who had been sent by the General to guide the waggons to the camping-ground; as they followed close behind us, he turned, and we all rode into Potchefstroom together.

It was a quaint little place, with its long row of unevenly built houses, its broad, sandy street, over which the weeping willows arched and cast their welcome shade. Cosy cottages peeped from their green retreats, and many a curious glance followed us as we rode along. I saw few with the sign of welcome on their features; the English

colonists did not see the use of our troops marching through a town which they had not conquered or taken by force of arms ; the Boers regarded the matter with contempt ; and the very children jeered in imitation of the sentiments they had heard expressed at home.

I noticed, as I rode through the principal and in fact only real street of Potchefstroom, that many of the larger stores were shut up ; one very big one particularly attracted my attention, and on making inquiries as to whom it belonged, I was informed that the owner had suffered severely during the siege, and had been forced to close up the building. The windows were smashed in, and all the stores had been taken away by the Boers, many of whom might have been seen parading the streets dressed up and fitted out in the trophies of their marauding hands. The original owner had departed from the place, and had sought to console himself by sending in a large claim to the Government—£200,000 I heard mentioned as the amount ; but whether eventually he obtained any recompense in the settlement of such claims by the Royal Commission, I have not heard.

We met General Buller in one of the little side streets, who gave us instructions where the

tents were to be pitched; and having ridden on and chosen the ground, we left the two waggons belonging to ourselves and the General in charge of the servants, and rode back to witness the entry of the troops. The order in which they moved was as follows:—First came the 94th with bayonets fixed, looking very dusty and not at all imposing; they were followed by the Inniskillings in half sections, which was done, I suppose, in order to extend the column, and give it as much effect as possible. The rear was composed of the 15th Hussars, mounted on their little colonial horses, and looking the picture of soldiers. Here were no weeds or weaklings, but men on whom one could depend in time of emergency. Soldiers of the old system, with long service to commend them, they presented a martial appearance indeed. My impression was evidently shared by two Boers, who had been standing close by me as the troops filed past. On their stolid countenances no expression of approval or disapproval could be traced, and I purposely stood near them in order to catch any remarks that this pageant might elicit. But they preserved religious silence until the 15th made their appearance. “Here are the blue coats,” said one; and when the troop had passed by, the other curtly

observed, "Yes, those blue coats *are* soldiers, if you like."

Riding on to the head of the column, I was able to take more notice of the manner in which the troops were received. A few feeble cheers strove to make themselves heard; but they sounded more like wails than anything else, and the onlookers consisted chiefly of Boers. The greater portion of the English colonists manifested their disapproval of our home policy by closing up their houses and keeping within; the few who did put in an appearance regarding it with grave disapproval. A well-dressed-looking Englishman who stood near came up and addressed me:—

"How long do those troops remain here?" he asked, "and why have they come?"

"It is a pretty well understood matter," I replied, "that the sealed orders of the General will instruct him to remain at Potchefstroom two or three days, and then march down country, whence he came."

"And he leaves here no garrison—nothing?" again inquired my friend.

"I believe not," I answered. "We have marched through the Transvaal to assert the Queen's authority; we shall now display a Union

Jack, burn a bonfire, and then return with honour. It is almost a foregone conclusion that the Transvaal is to be returned to the Boers. This march through the country is doubtless done to pacify the public at home."

"Pah!" said the man, turning away; "they need not have troubled to come; we don't want them. The sooner they go the better."

The expression of opinion volunteered so freely by this colonist was but a type of the universal feeling that I found everywhere prevalent amongst Englishmen. Disgust and contempt had asserted their reign, and the minds of the settlers harboured all that was bitter and unforgiving towards the authors of a policy which they asserted would be their ruin. In a stationer's window I saw two large prints—one of Lord Beaconsfield, the other of Mr. Gladstone. Garlands of *immortelle* flowers adorned the frame of the former, and the words, "Sacred to the Memory of Him who brought us Peace with Honour," were prettily arranged in letters composed of many-coloured flowers at the bottom of the picture. Close by, draped in crape, hung the likeness of Mr. Gladstone reversed, and the words "Death to Honour" arranged in letters composed of faded flowers.

"Is not that a rather petty way of showing your spleen?" I inquired of the master of the shop, who stood at the door.

"It is as we feel, madam," he answered; and I felt silenced by this rebuke, for the reply evidently came straight from the man's heart, and disclosed the genuine feeling of its author. He, however, to please me, and at my particular request, reversed the picture of Mr. Gladstone to a more dignified position, though he refused to remove the inscription above it; and I having superintended this process to my satisfaction, turned to watch the pageant once more. But the troops had all filed by, and the triumphant entry into Potchefstroom was over; so, leaving the main street and my discontented friends, I rode back to camp and luncheon.

I found our tents pitched close to a little stream immediately facing the ruined fort of Potchefstroom. On our right, and in front of us also, was the cemetery, enclosed by strong brick walls. From its north-western face a cavalier, or raised earthwork, had been made by the Boers, extending in length some 400 yards, and joining on to a sap, from which they could look into the English trench that ran up from the fort to within a few yards of their own earthwork. Between

the two was the magazine, to command which the English trench had been dug; but it must have been dangerous work getting at the stores in such close proximity to the Boers. At the back of our tents much evidence yet remained to show the havoc committed during the siege. Potchefstroom itself was in the hands of the Boers at that time, and the hastily erected fort in which the besieged held out was all that remained to the English. One of the evidences of the havoc wrought by their shells was the minister's house, whose ruins stood not far behind our tents. Struck by one of these missiles, it at once caught fire, and all that now remained were the burnt, charred walls. A line of small houses extending from this spot was riddled with bullets, and the whole appearance of the Tronk, or gaol, was that of disfigurement and ruin.

After luncheon we rode across to the fort itself, distant from our tents not more than 400 yards. To me it appeared a marvel how so many people had managed to squeeze into so small a place; its entire circumference could not have exceeded 250 feet, while the interior space must have been even more limited. All around was ruin, but sufficient remained to give one a fair idea of the structure and size of the fort, and a good insight into the

heroic efforts of the besieged, who must have worked hard to have made it so strong. When they first occupied it the defences consisted of a slight ditch and some mealie bags, which, under the gallant hands that toiled so bravely, eventually assumed more imposing proportions. The sufferings of the besieged must at the very outset have been terrible, in consequence of the scarcity of water. Expeditions had to be sent out some 1200 yards from the fort, under cover of darkness, to bring it in, all digging inside for a long time proving fruitless, until the Royal Artillery found some, at a depth of sixteen feet, on the left front, which fortunately supplied them throughout the three months. However, for the first fortnight they do not seem to have lacked provisions, as full rations of tinned meat and biscuits were issued; but from this period the rations were reduced to half, and mealies made to serve the loss of the other portion, until, towards the last days of the siege, even mealies began to fail, they having been for some time the only food left to the reduced, suffering, but gallant garrison.

It was found necessary, after a time, to destroy the powder in the town magazine. This lay, as I have already remarked, some 200 yards to the right rear of the fort. The besieged, however,

occupied it, and by means of a sap carried on communication with its defenders. Up to within a few yards of it the Boers had also run a sap, and would before long have reached the magazine, had not Lieutenant Hay, acting under orders, made a sortie with ten volunteers for the purpose of dislodging the workers. Under heavy fire, and across an open space of over 250 yards, this gallant little band charged. Two of our men fell, and for a few minutes the rest lay down to get their breath. When they rose to renew the charge thirty Boers were seen making off in the trench, on whom a heavy fire was directed, which told severely amongst the enemy. Up these saps and round to the Boer trenches I rode. Very little of the dangerous work had been done by the Boers, who had forced into this service all their civilian prisoners and numerous Kaffirs. It must have been hard for these poor fellows to feel that they were working against their own friends, and still worse for those in the fort, whose every retaliating shell or aggressive bullet often laid low those whose work in the trenches was compulsory.

We found the graves of its gallant defenders not far removed from the right rear of the fort. They were in a terrible state of untidyness, which

was well in keeping with both the interior and exterior of the place. Torn clothes, worn-out boots, old tins, helmets, and many other articles, lay scattered about in great profusion, giving ample proof of the recent occupation. Several bands of men were sent up from the camp by the General's orders to tidy up the graves and clear out the fort. At first there was some talk of levelling it to the ground, but the project was abandoned as involving too much time and labour in the few days' sojourn at Potchefstroom, which had been set aside to rest and refresh the men. On our return to camp we were somewhat agreeably surprised at receiving a visit from a gentleman, who informed us that his name was Captain Baily, and that he was nothing more or less than own brother to our "Jim Baily" of English renown. We gave him a hearty welcome, and accepted an invitation which he gave us on taking leave that afternoon to visit his farm, which stood about a mile distant on the outskirts of Potchefstroom. He bore away with him a present we made him in the shape of a leg of mutton! which he assured us would prove a great treat, nothing but trek being available in those parts.

The remainder of that afternoon and the following day was spent in seeing the sights of

Potchefstroom. True, there was little or nothing to be seen; but we enjoyed ourselves fairly well, wandering about the place, inspecting the ruins, and chattering with various members of the English colony, who entertained us with many a stirring tale of the late siege. Then it was pleasant to feel that for those few hours at least there would be no wearisome trekking or necessity for exertion; and the reaction of one day's idleness acted with good effect on the spirits and tempers of our party. It was not unneeded either, for we had in prospect on the morrow a long ride before us, a distance of over one hundred miles to traverse, in a journey that had been planned to visit Pretoria. The arrangements were, to leave our waggon behind with the troops in charge of Captain Beresford and two servants, while we two, accompanied by my groom, and taking with us one extra horse to carry the packs, should push forward to Pretoria. It was with some misgivings that we settled these plans; the country we should have to traverse was unknown to us, and the instructions given by various people with a view of putting us on the right way were so vague and contradictory that we felt as wise when they were over as before they had been given. However, to Pretoria we had to get, and to

Pretoria we meant to get, by hook or crook. The few preparations that had to be made were gone through the evening before, and in anticipation of an early start next morning we ate our dinner an hour before the usual time, and sought our couches to rest and sleep. I say to rest and sleep ; but this proved harder than we imagined possible, for with the rising moon there arose also along the length and breadth of Potchefstroom a wild medley of ghastly sounds. Prolonged and dismal howls rent the air ; the barking of dogs, the screams of cats, and the discordant crowing of hundreds of cocks, suddenly burst forth, producing the most excruciating noise. Seldom have I heard before sounds so discordant and horrible. They banished all wish or desire to sleep, and for over an hour we were doomed to listen to their disgusting melody. Then the angel of peace drew nigh as by magic ; the uproar ceased ; silence and rest took possession of the moonlit night : their soothing influence made sleep once more possible, and availing myself of the opportunity, it was not long before I sought the Land of Nod. Yet even there my rest was disturbed, and my dreams haunted by the wild notes of the nightingales of Potchefstroom still ringing in my ears.

CHAPTER XIV.

SUNRISE ON POTCHEFSTROOM—FAREWELL POTCHEFSTROOM—
FRUITLESS INTERROGATION—TWO WELCOMES—DISTANCE
CALCULATED BY TIME—AN AGREEABLE SURPRISE—AN
UNSAVOURY MESS—A GENIAL COMPANION—CAMPING OUT—
A LONELY GRAVE—PRETORIA HO!—DEVOTION OF PUNCH
—A MIDNIGHT LETTER.

DAY was breaking when I awoke on the following morning, and the pale flush tinging the eastern sky gave warning of the sun's approach. The air was cold and crisp, but its freshness drove sleep away and infused life and vigour into the sluggard body, which shrunk from its first chill touch. A glorious morning it was; I remember it amongst all others for the grandeur and beauty of its sunrise. The town of Potchefstroom and the surrounding plains seemed enveloped in one large golden wave, and the rosy tints on a brilliant sky added to the rare and exquisite colours which suffused the whole scene. Not a morning to waste in dozing away in a stuffy tent, thought I to myself, as I listened to several prolonged snores

hard by. "Get up, you lazy creatures!" I shouted, and the snores ceased; a general shaking went on inside each tent—proof sufficient that the inmates were stirring; and then one or two lazy bipeds made their appearance, with the pinched, cold look of unwilling risers deeply marked on their features. It always amused me to watch Captain Beresford emerge from his tent, insomuch as he was obliged to do so on all fours. This tent, which we called the blue bedroom, to distinguish it from a similar one that went by the name of the green-room, was nothing but a tiny *tente d'abri*, so low and narrow that a small child would have to bend to get inside. As Captain Beresford stood considerably over six feet, the spectacle presented by his attempts to get in and out of his bedroom was extremely ludicrous. On the morning in question, in trying to be more agile than usual, he caught his back against the top of the tent, and the whole thing came bodily to the ground. This catastrophe was not serious, however, and a few minutes were sufficient to restore the fallen edifice. We would fain have lingered over our last breakfast together, and the prospect of a separation from the column and our cheery friends made us quite melancholy; but still a change is always pleasant, and the look-out was not so dreary as to

fill us with any inordinate pangs of regret. We were going to fresh scenes of interest; we knew that at our journey's end we had hospitable friends ready to welcome us; while the quick travelling in which we should indulge would be a welcome change in the weary jog of a monotonous march. So, breakfast over, we lost no time in making a start. It was found necessary to take two pack-horses, which increased the number of our animals to five. One of these became the charge of my husband, my groom superintending the other; and the place I occupied was that of whipper-in, should the animals lag or show signs of laziness. Having started them going, I galloped down to the headquarter tents to take leave of General Buller, after which, by following a short cut across a broad plain at the back of the camp, I managed to overtake them on the outskirts of Potchefstroom. A few minutes later a turn in the road hid the town from our view, and with its disappearance we felt that our journey had really begun, and that we were well launched on our way to Pretoria.

For the first hour or so we cantered along gaily enough; then the heat became oppressive; our horses began to show signs of distress, and we were forced to slacken speed to a considerable

extent. Occasionally a bye road would help to confuse us in our desire to keep on the right track, and a good deal of discussion as to which was the correct course to take would ensue. Inquiry of passing Boers served little to enlighten us; to our queries of "Pretoria?"—accompanied by signs and pointing in the direction in which we imagined the place lay—they returned a stolid stare, or ejaculated a few incomprehensible syllables, which only confused us and left us as ignorant of what we desired to learn as before. A large waggon containing a whole family of several generations passed close by us on one of these occasions, the old Boer who carried the whip appearing a very patriarch, with his long gray beard and snow-white hair. A strong span of twelve fat, sleek oxen lazily followed their foreloucher, a tiny little Kaffir boy, who could not have been more than seven or eight years old; while from the interior of the hooded vehicle peeped and peered many women's faces, some young and comely, others old and ugly, and innumerable children of all ages and sizes, whose curiosity was aroused to have a look at the "Englishmann." On signing to the old Boer to halt, the most extraordinary cries and sounds at once proceeded from his lips, sounds which I should have thought

sufficient to frighten any animal into frantic exertion. But the effect on the oxen was quite the reverse, and on the forelouper giving vent to a long admonishing whistle, the animals came to a dead stop, and the rumbling, unwieldy vehicle halted. "Wo ist Pretoria?" inquired I, accompanying the interrogation with the usual signs and pointing. All the reply that was vouchsafed, however, was a grunt from the Boer and a giggle or two from the women. This was confusing; and, as we had no time to waste, there was nothing for it but to ride on at once, after bidding an ironical adieu to the old Dutchman, who replied only by a stolid stare. Happily, a little farther on the road we fell in with a spider coming from the direction in which we were going. It was driven by an Englishman, who at once gave us the information we desired, accompanied by instructions which served to assist us greatly on our journey. On learning that we were bound for Pretoria, he begged us to tell Sir Evelyn Wood that we had met him thus far on his journey, adding that he was the bearer of a despatch from the General to Major Clarke and General Buller at Potchefstroom. Promising to do so we parted, and with confidence as to keeping the right road, at least for some

distance farther, we endeavoured to make up our lost ground by putting on the pace a bit. Fifteen miles on the road brought us to a place called Stompoe-fontein, where we decided to off-saddle for half an hour and give the horses a feed and a roll. This was found to be most necessary, as the pony ridden by my husband already began to show signs of fatigue; and as we had over fifty miles more before us that day the look-out was not as reassuring as might have been desired under the circumstances. Stompoe-fontein was not an inviting looking place; lonely, dreary, and consisting of only three houses, all of which had the appearance of being deserted, we were somewhat at a loss where to off-saddle. As time, however, was precious, we rode up to the door of the most presentable of these dwellings and endeavoured to obtain an entrance. After repeated knockings a tall, fat, sour-faced *frau* made her appearance, and in a harsh voice and unintelligible tongue, evidently—though we did not understand her—demanded our requirements. Pointing to the horses I made signs that we wished to off-saddle; but her only reply was to slam the door in our faces, and we heard the key turned and double turned in the lock—proof sufficient that for us there was no admittance to the mansion of this

inhospitable Dutchwoman. However, there was nothing for it but to make the best of matters; so, giving vent to our wrath in compliments the reverse of polite against all Boers and Dutchmen in general, we prepared to continue our journey not a little crestfallen. But help was nearer at hand than we anticipated; a turn in the road brought us in sight of a tiny, tumble-down-looking shanty, at the door of which stood a man smoking a short clay pipe. He was a rough-looking creature enough, but there was something in his features when I looked at them which convinced me that they were not those of a Boer. "Good morning, mister," I called out to him; and it was like music to one's ears to hear the answer returned in the tongue of the old country. Here we felt sure of a welcome, and a few minutes later saw the horses enjoying their roll and feed of crushed mealies, with which the good fellow hastened to supply them. We found him, like many others, a sufferer from the late war. Previous to the Boer insurrection he had been comparatively well-to-do and in comfortable circumstances; but the poverty to which he had been reduced was now all too apparent, and the dejection into which he had fallen was painful to witness. His wife informed me that they had

lost everything, and that she feared her husband would never sufficiently recover from the bitterness of his misfortunes to endeavour to build up once more his fallen house. When I informed them that the English Government had decided to return the Transvaal to the Boers, their indignation knew no bounds. "This, then, is the reward we receive for being loyal!" exclaimed the man; "throughout the war neither pressure nor persecution would attract me to espouse the Dutch side; my loyalty has been my ruin, and I must be a beggar for the rest of my days."

It was impossible not to feel the greatest sympathy for the unfortunate man, and all I could think of in the way of comfort and consolation I endeavoured to bring forward to cheer him up; but every effort was unavailing, and there being no time to spare in further attempts, I relinquished the case as a bad job. It took a full quarter of an hour to saddle up once more and get the packs firmly fastened on to the sumpter horses. In this we were actively assisted by Mr. Macdonald—for such was the name of our hospitable host—who would accept of no remuneration for his pains; neither would he consent to take any payment for the horses' feeds, which caused me much embarrassment, until the happy thought of giving it

to one of his boys suddenly struck me. When we started to continue our journey we did so with the kindly and genuine welcome of these poor people deeply impressed upon us, and it will be long before the memory of their ready hospitality is effaced from my mind.

We got over the next twenty miles easily enough, the rest at Stompoe-fontein having done the tired horse good. But 15 stone is a great weight to carry through any journey, and it was decided before starting on the next stage to transfer the packs from one of the horses that carried them to the back of this animal, so that a fair division of labour might be shared alike. We were about this time beginning to look out for "Wonderfontein," which our late host had informed us lay some three hours and a half distant from his place. In these parts distance is always measured by time, and the horse's pace is regulated to an average of six miles an hour. Instead of inquiring the distance of any passer-by, it would be necessary, if you wished to save explanation, to ask how many hours it was to the place one wished to go to, and the reply would be at once prompt and to the point. From several passing Kaffirs we strove to find out where Wonderfontein lay, as we felt certain that we must be somewhere

in its close vicinity ; but their replies were unintelligible, and as they all pointed in different directions, we felt that there would be some difficulty in deciding which was the right one. To add to our perplexity, the road suddenly branched off into three separate ways, the wheel marks in each being as deeply traced on the one as on the other, so that we could jump to no conclusions that the one which appeared most used would be the correct line to pursue. In this dilemma, we suddenly beheld a waggon slowly approaching us, while in another direction I caught sight of two mounted Boers crossing some water not far off. Leaving the others to elicit what they could from the occupants of the waggon, I galloped down to the water's edge, and, trusting to the influence of distance to make German intelligible, I boldly inquired in that language the right road to Wonderfontein. To my surprise the reply was returned in the same tongue, and the speaker, riding back, courteously gave me the information required, as well as minute directions as to how I should find the farm of one Oberholzen, a loyal Boer, at whose house we wished to off-saddle. On rejoining the others I found them vainly trying to induce a Boer to put them on the right road ; the information I brought put

an end, however, to any further useless interrogation ; and following the instructions given me by the courteous German, it was not many minutes before we arrived in sight of Oberholzen's farm. At the door of his house stood the old man ready to receive us ; by his side was a young woman and a small group of children ; and as we rode up a gentleman appeared from the interior of the building, and, coming forward to meet me, begged permission to render any assistance in his power in the matter of interpreting or affording us help in any way. Somewhat surprised, I inquired of him how he knew who we were ; to which he replied that he had heard at Potchefstroom of our intended journey, and being about to make the same himself he had hoped to fall in with us on the road. By starting at an earlier hour and by taking a short cut he had, however, missed us that morning, but he trusted to be of use to us during the remainder of the journey if we would permit him to have that pleasure. This was an agreeable surprise ; visions of our ride being greatly facilitated by the addition of this gentleman to the party began to arise, and we congratulated ourselves on the fortunate *rencontre*. With the assistance of our host's grandsons, two young boys of twelve or fourteen years old, we

unsaddled the horses and attended to their wants, liberal feeds of barley and chaff being strewed on the ground for them to indulge in. On going inside we found a woman nursing the inevitable baby and surrounded by half a dozen young children of all sizes and ages. The old man, Oberholzen, was exceedingly anxious to make us comfortable, and jabbered away without end ; but his polite sentences were entirely lost upon us, and I was not sorry when our new friend made his appearance and put matters on a more equal footing by translating the old gentleman's speeches. Of these we had a succession, while the *frau* prepared some refreshment ; and I must confess that this latter process filled me with a good deal more interest than the stories of "mine host," for the breakfast we had partaken of that morning had been but a hurried meal, and the cravings of hunger were beginning to assert themselves.

At last we were called to the meal ; and the old man having taken his seat at the head of the table and signed to us to place ourselves beside him, the children were next permitted to range themselves at the lower end of the board. Grace was then gone through,—a very elaborate affair, somewhat resembling a short service ; and at last, just as I was beginning to wonder when the whole

business would come to an end, and we should be allowed to feed, the dish was brought in. For some time during the carving process I racked my brain to discover what the savoury mess before me consisted of. It was the funniest looking concoction I had ever seen, and seemed to consist of fat, and fat alone. On inquiry our new friend informed me that it was boiled mutton-bone, the usual fare of the Boer, and that even at that moment old Oberholzen was descanting on its excellence. Hungry as I was, I could not agree with him; it was a dish that might have delighted the heart of an Esquimaux by the preponderance of its fatty and glutinous substance; but I must say, when I had bolted the last mouthful, the sigh of relief to which I gave vent was indeed genuine and heartfelt.

In course of the conversation sustained through the interpretation of our new friend, whose name I made out to be Mr. Latour, Oberholzen informed us that he had disowned two sons for fighting against the English during the war. This sin, he asserted, he would never forgive them as long as he lived, and proceeded to question us on the future policy of the Government in regard to the Transvaal. I could not bring myself to break the truth to him, and left it to others to inform

this loyal old man. Probably ere now he has tasted of the gratitude of nations, and felt the revenge of his countrymen, whom he refused to join in their rebellious and insurrectionary movement.

The repast being over, we went out to see if our horses had finished theirs. This they had done; so saddles and bridles were once more brought out and preparations made to continue our way. The whole family assembled to see us off, including the woman with the baby; and as it is the custom in these parts to shake hands with everybody all round, the time occupied in so doing was somewhat long. But at last the final handshake was gone through; and, tendering to our aged host our final thanks for his kindness and hospitality, we started for the Veldt once more.

The country through which we passed was flat and uninteresting, its vast track of veldt appeared wholly deserted, save when now and then at long intervals a house would appear in the distance. Beyond a few travelling Kaffirs trekking to the Diamond Fields, human beings were scarce, and the deserted country seemed given up to the undivided possession of a few springbok and another species of antelope whose name I did not know. Altogether it would have been a weary ride had it not been for the cheery conversation

of Mr. Latour. He informed us that he was an American, and had held important posts under the English Government in Pretoria and elsewhere; he was also the chief auctioneer of the place, and before the war had driven a thriving trade. But the outbreak had been the cause of great loss to him, and the proposed cession of the Transvaal to the Boers by the English Government would put the climax on his misfortunes and accelerate his ruin. Though he grew despondent at times, he was generally cheery enough, and the anecdotes which he recounted of that period during the sieges of Potchefstroom and Pretoria served to interest us during the most monotonous portion of the journey. At the end of thirty miles the horses began to show signs of fatigue, and the day was fast passing away. We were desirous of reaching a place called Grobler's Farm, some nine miles farther on; but it was impossible to proceed without another off-saddle, and consequently we were not sorry when, on turning a corner of the road we were pursuing, a large wayside house suddenly presented itself. This, Mr. Latour informed us, was the dwelling of a friend of his, Mr. Jacoby by name; and the gentleman in question soon put in an appearance from the interior of a waggon, in which he was holding a *levée* of friends. During

the twenty minutes off-saddle, which was the longest period we could afford to give the horses, Mr. Jacoby entertained us in his own house with coffee and conversation. He spoke English fluently, and seemed a most intelligent and well educated man. During the siege of Pretoria he had linked his fortunes with those of the British and turned his arms against his rebellious countrymen. The news of the proposed cession of the Transvaal which we brought struck him like a thunderbolt, and for a long time he remained incredulous. Then when he began at last to perceive that we were seriously speaking the truth, his indignation knew no bounds. I will pass over the remarks which ensued, as repetition of an oft-repeated story; but it was impossible to blame the man for the contempt which this friend-forsaking policy inspired in his hitherto brave and loyal breast. The last nine miles were wearisome enough; the horses were beginning to grow stiff and footsore, and we were obliged to take them along quite quietly. But at last, as the sun began to sink below the horizon, Grobler's hove in sight; and the tired animals, scenting oat hay and other delicacies, brightened up considerably and made haste to arrive at what their instinct told them was their night's resting-place.

But Grobler's, reached, was not the place we had anticipated it to be. The house was full of Boers, and the only accommodation that could be offered was a small and very dirty bedroom, one look at which was sufficient to dispel any wish to become its habitant. Procuring some bread and a few mutton chops, we accordingly retired to a convenient camping ground close to a delightful little stream, where the horses were tethered and blanketed and liberally supplied with oat hay, which, besides affording a favourite repast, was the means of making them a most luxurious couch. So comfortable did they look that we at once thought we could not do better than imitate them, and, a few more bundles of the oat hay being procured from Grobler's, we laid out for ourselves very comfortable beds on a smooth, hard piece of ground close to the horses. Then a fire was lit, the chops were cooked, and a hearty meal followed, enjoyed all the more because we had earned it after our long ride of seventy miles that day. Dinner over, I sauntered up to the inn to look about me and examine the place at my leisure. A fragrant smell of tobacco and square-face (gin) pervaded the air; and as I peeped into the apartment which served the purpose of dining, sleeping, and drinking room combined, I congratulated

myself on having decided to encamp in the open air. Round a long wooden table some twenty or thirty Boers were congregated. Every man was smoking and drinking, and many were playing cards. From the tenor of the conversation I made out that one of the players was the murderer of the man Malcolm (who had been killed during the war, at Edgson's store), his companions in the game being his own keepers. This man was being conveyed a prisoner to Pretoria, to take his trial for the murder before a Royal Commission ; but the anticipation of conviction did not seem to trouble him much, and, discussing the matter, I heard him openly vaunt the inability of any one to convict him, describing the trial which would take place as a sham and a farce, gone through with merely to satisfy the English public at home. This assertion was greeted with a round of applause and much laughter, provoked by several remarks of the landlord, Grobler himself, who spoke of England and the English people in terms the reverse of complimentary. As the conversation was neither pleasing nor edifying I soon tired of listening to it, and, leaving the men to their cards, square-face, and bad tobacco, I returned to camp and my straw bed. My head once on the saddle (I was going to say the pillow !), I

remember very little more beyond a bright moon, a clear night, and a brilliant, star-bespangled heaven. Contrasting these favourably with the smoky atmosphere I had not long quitted, and weary with the exertions of the day, I speedily fell asleep. We were up and stirring the following morning before five o'clock, and an early start was made. Indeed we were already a good many miles on the way before the sun rose, for we wished to reach Pretoria before midday—added to which the cool hours of morning were considered the best travelling time for the horses, who started rather stiff and footsore. It was not long, however, before they warmed to their work, and we went along merrily enough. Crossing the Crocodile River we came upon Edgson's store, and halted for a few minutes to visit the grave of the murdered Malcolm. It was close by the roadside, immediately facing the store, and half concealed by some thick trees which formed part of a little wood or jungle, which grew right down to the banks of the Crocodile—a lonely resting place, which would soon be effaced and forgotten, while he who lay beneath would sleep on unavenged, for, to repeat the words of the murderer himself, "he defied conviction, and looked upon the trial

which would ensue as a mere sham and farce, gone through with but to satisfy the English public."

The store itself was in a most dilapidated state, and the late owner had trekked away from the scene of ruin and desolation with a curse on his lips, levelled both at the Boers, the authors of his ruin, and at that administration which had permitted these acts of rapine and spoliation. Far away he had wandered to the green estancias of South America, a ruined man, with no means or opportunity to seek redress; all that remained to him he had left behind, and a fresh life of labour and struggle would have to be faced and gone through, ere the ruin wrought during those few lawless days could be repaired or forgotten.

The present inhabitant of the place was a young Englishman who had taken possession of the dilapidated domicile. He was very anxious that we should off-saddle and partake of his hospitality, but we were forced to decline in consequence of the necessity of pushing forward with as little delay as possible, in order to reach Pretoria before midday. After leaving the Crocodile we forded successively the Tokeskey and Hennops rivers, at the former of which a short off-saddle took place for breakfast. This

was close to the small location of Dritz, which consisted of one or two houses only, and a forsaken and dilapidated store. Then, as the sun began to strike down with all the intenseness of midday heat, distressing alike to ourselves and to the horses, the hilly and rugged outskirts of Pretoria hove in sight, and a few minutes later saw us threading their winding intricacies previous to entering the circular basin or plain in which the town lay.

It was with feelings of unmixed satisfaction that we felt our weary journey was at length ended. One hundred and eight miles in twenty-eight hours, including all stoppages and the night's rest, is by no means bad travelling for any horse, and our good steeds had performed the journey pluckily and well. Most of them were little more than ponies, the biggest standing about 14.2, and the smallest 13 hands. This last was a Basuto pony and my favourite mount—a tough little specimen, who could stand any amount of hard work and long distances, provided his one fancy was not denied him. This fancy consisted in always being near and in close attendance upon a cream-coloured mare belonging to my husband. She went by the name of Nancy, was a Zulu pony, and had been all through the

Zulu war. From the first day he saw her, Punch,—for so my pony was called—fell desperately in love; and as you valued your own peace of mind and the comfort of the whole camp, particular attention had to be paid that they were never separated. On one occasion this rule was infringed upon, and Nancy was saddled and sent off with my servant on her back on an errand into Newcastle. No sooner had she disappeared from sight than Punch, who had been growing more fidgety and anxious every moment, set up a wild screech of despair so intense in its misery that it startled every one who heard it; and before any one could get near him to restrain him, he had flung himself back with all his might on the ground, bringing his whole weight to bear against the cord which held him. The toughest hemp could hardly have resisted the shock, and on this particular occasion it broke like thread. Away like lightning went Punch, his heels flourishing defiance at his pursuers, and his shrill, piercing neighs resounding far and wide. In answering echoes came the voice of Nancy from the distance, and silence only was restored when the former had succeeded in rejoining his lady-love. Punch's devotion never grew less; on the contrary, each day bound his affection more closely to

Nancy, and when I left Africa for England, having decided that Punch should be brought over, I was obliged to give instructions that Nancy should accompany him. They came back to this country with the 15th Hussars, and now stand in two large loose boxes side by side at home. Through the bars which divide the boxes Punch is able to keep a continual watch on Nancy ; he is very happy and contented because she is near. A comfortable, lazy life he leads, too ; he munches his hay and ruminates over his oats with quiet complacency : a pony with great force of character, he doubtless dreams of the hard times of past days, the long, weary trekking and oftentimes doubtful fare. He has probably often ere now contrasted his present quarters with those of other days, and in his sleek well-to-do appearance manifests plainly his appreciation of luxury and ease.

But in my account of Punch and his doings, I have wandered rather wide of Pretoria. Very dusty and travel-stained was our appearance as we approached the town, so much so that my suggestion to encamp on the outskirts was received with favour, and we decided to find some quiet nook where we could encamp for that afternoon and night, proceeding on to Govern-

ment House in the morning. At this point Mr. Latour separated himself from us, and rode on to his own place in the town, while we proceeded to select our ground. Tom was despatched to procure food, and when he returned he was sent off once more in search of the commissariat department, and rations for the horses. All that afternoon we were very busy, and the time slipped away quickly enough. We took our last meal about eight o'clock ; then, spreading a blanket under some thick bushes, I rolled myself up in it, and, even more weary than the night before, was soon fast asleep.

It must have been near midnight when a horse treading close to me, and a bright light flashing in my eyes, made me spring up from where I was lying. "Who is it?" I called out; and the answer came back through the darkness in a voice which I knew well. "It is I—Walkinshaw; is this Lady Florence Dixie's encampment?"

"Yes, Walkinshaw," I replied; "here I am; but how did you manage to find us out?"

"I have brought a letter for your ladyship," answered the man; "the General told me to find you, so I hunted about until I did. Will your ladyship read it?" he continued, holding the light and the letter out together.

The envelope was addressed to myself in the handwriting of Sir Evelyn Wood, with the superscription, "No one knows where," meant doubtless as a guide to Walkinshaw, his servant, towards more quickly tracing our whereabouts! This, after an hour's search, the clever fellow had succeeded in doing; but then Walkinshaw is a servant in a thousand, and it would be hard to find his equal. The letter contained an immediate invitation to Government House, and ran as follows :—

GOVERNMENT HOUSE, TRANSVAAL,
SOUTH AFRICA, *June 18, 1881.*

DEAR LADY FLORENCE—*On dit* you have arrived, and leave early to-morrow! Pray don't. Come here. Will board you; and if you are bound by the next post-cart, we'll try to add to Sir Beaumont's weight by to-morrow week. If you come to 9 o'clock breakfast, I'll mount you both for a ride to the scene of a fight at 11 A.M. Yours very sincerely,

EVELYN WOOD.

Pens and paper not being handy, I sent back a verbal message by Walkinshaw, to say that we would be at Government House for breakfast; then, bidding the man good-night, I returned to my blanket to resume that sleep which the incident related had interrupted, and ere the sound of his horse's hoofs had died away I was once more in the Land of Nod.

CHAPTER XV.

PLEASANT ANTICIPATION — GOVERNMENT HOUSE — TAKING IT
EASILY — STRÜBEN'S FARM — A WASTE OF LEAD — A BOER
CHAMPION — IMAGINATION'S DREAM.

TOWARDS the early hours of morning it came on to freeze with great severity, and insufficiently provided with wraps as we were, it may be imagined that we suffered a good deal in consequence. One blanket apiece was all that we possessed, and these having been supplied from the commissariat were of poor and thin material. The regulation blanket is not of the warmest, and we had reason to ascertain this to be the case on this occasion. I was not sorry when the rising hour arrived, and I was able to forsake my hard and chilly place of rest. The anticipation of a decent breakfast,—of chairs and tables once more, a warm bath in prospect, and the pleasure of finding one's self again in a real bed, was something to look forward to. The hardships of the past and those of the present seemed to melt away before

the pleasures of anticipation, and I found myself greedily revelling in the advent of those coming joys.

At nine o'clock we saddled Punch and Nancy, and, leaving Tom to pack up the few things that we possessed, we started to look for Government House. A short ride along a straight road, lined with weeping willows, from which pretty little dwelling houses peeped out here and there, brought us in sight of our destination. How cool and shady it looked to us weary travellers—a very paradise, half hidden in trees, the sight of which seemed to invite rest and repose.

Turning in at some gates guarded by two smart-looking sentries of the 21st Royal Scots Fusiliers, we rode up to the front of Government House, and, dismounting, relinquished our ponies to two 15th Hussar orderlies, who came up to receive them. At the same moment Walkinshaw made his appearance, and informed us that everybody was dressing, and breakfast would be ready before long. This was satisfactory information, for I must confess I felt hungry enough; but when it was followed by an offer of a warm bath which could be prepared at once, the satisfaction of the moment was increased and the offer gladly accepted. Following Walkinshaw I

was ushered into a cool little room, which the man informed me had been prepared for myself, and in one corner stood the steaming and inviting bath, in which I soon hastened to indulge.

My toilet completed, I next went in search of the breakfast room. Here I found every one assembled and looking so smart that the worn, travel-stained habit in which I was dressed presented a most shabby spectacle, and strikingly contrasted with the clean orderly appearance of every one. However, they had been living in comparative luxury, while I had been posting along dusty roads; so the contrast was hardly to be wondered at, and if it amused them it bothered me but little. Sir Hercules Robinson appeared in white waistcoat, frock-coat, and well-fitting trousers. Looking at his neatly tied tie, I began to feel myself transported back to London, and to wonder was I really in the Transvaal after all? The military appearance, however, of Sir Evelyn and Major Fraser, as also of his aide-de-camp Captain Slade, dissipated any misgivings or doubts as to my whereabouts, and the friendly greeting of everyone reminded me that we had fallen amongst friends. A hearty breakfast followed, which we both enjoyed and appreciated, during which the plans for the day were discussed

and arranged, and a ride decided on to the scene of the one British victory during the Boer war—The Zwart Koppie—distant about ten or twelve miles from Pretoria. After breakfast Captain Slade went out to order the horses to be in readiness in an hour's time, and I seized the opportunity to ensconce myself in an easy chair in the verandah, which overlooked a shady garden, in which were pitched several tents. Two of these were the bedrooms of Captain Slade and Lieutenant Hamilton, the latter Sir Evelyn Wood's private secretary and brother of Lady Colley. Several larger tents acted the part of offices to the secretaries and those engaged in the work of the Royal Commission, there being no room in the house itself suitable for the purpose, with the exception of the one used by Sir Evelyn Wood himself.

They looked very picturesque, peeping out from amongst the green trees, and the scene was a pretty one. So I thought as, leaning back in my easy chair, I gave myself up to the soothing influences of all around. Outside a hot sun was shining, but it could not penetrate the thick shady awning of the weeping willows, and the verandah was a cool and comfortable spot in consequence. I felt quite sorry when Sir Evelyn made his

appearance booted and spurred for the ride, for I felt that I must be up and stirring, and resented activity with the lazy sloth of one to whom rest was a new and pleasurable enjoyment. Before long Colonel Gildea arrived, which was the signal for a general mount, and in a few minutes we were galloping down the tree-lined streets of Pretoria, a large and merry party. On gaining the outskirts of the town, our road became picturesque and interesting, and the number of natural fortifications formed by the rugged and uneven ground was exceedingly striking.

We got over the ground quickly enough, our gallant leader taking us along at a real good pace, so that distance could scarcely be measured in the ordinary Boer calculation of time! Dull none of us felt; we were in good spirits, as the merry conversation sustained testified to be the case, and every one was surprised when the gables of a large armhouse peeping out from amidst an ocean of green suddenly appeared in sight, and we became aware that we had already got over more than half the distance to be traversed. Under the shade of some giant poplars which surrounded the building we halted to change horses. These we found ready, waiting us in the charge of the faithful Walkinshaw, and that process having been

gone through, we were speedily in readiness to continue the journey. The name of this place was "Strüben's Farm," situated about a mile and a half from "Daniel Erasmus's Farm." During the siege of Pretoria this latter place had served as a laager, with about twenty or thirty waggons, and was garrisoned by a force of a hundred Boers, who maintained a strong position on the left-hand bank of Six-mile Spruit under a hill. To it "Strüben's Farm" served as a kind of outpost, where from twenty to thirty men were placed in laager in an equally strong position.

It was an exceedingly pretty place, but desolate from the fact that the owner no longer lived there. Since the war he had left it altogether, and had placed it in the market. Looking at its cool avenues and glistening lake I could not help thinking that it would be a delightful purchase, and once or twice during the ride that day I found myself seriously contemplating the matter. Having, however, slept over it that night, the decision arrived at in the morning was in the negative. Soon after leaving "Strüben's Farm," we sighted in the distance "The Zwart Koppie," when Sir Evelyn took occasion to air and exercise the knowledge of several officers of the party by asking them severally to calculate the exact dis-

tance which separated it from the place on which, at putting the question, he had pulled up. The replies given were all pretty satisfactory and close within the real distance, Captain Slade just missing complete accuracy by about four yards. On reaching the scene of the engagement we all dismounted and scrambled up the small masses of disjointed rock, of which the "Zwart Kop" is composed. On the summit we clustered round Colonel Gildea, while that officer gave us an interesting account of the attack, and pointed out the different positions occupied by our men in their advance on the Zwart Kop. It was here that the Boers endeavoured to entrap us by treachery, hoisting the flag of truce, upon which the Colonel and his orderly crossed the river and rode towards them, carrying a white handkerchief affixed to a lance. Getting him within easy range, the enemy treacherously opened fire, at which dishonourable act the 21st Fusiliers were at once ordered to advance, and, crossing the river, took the place after some short but sharp fighting.

Before mounting again we followed Sir Evelyn to the Zwart Kop farm close by, which we found dismantled and deserted, and riddled with bullets. It was prettily situated on the edge of a shady

wood, which had proved of much service to our men in their advance, affording them thick covert against the deadly Boer aim. Bullets had left their mark on everything around, and the waste of lead at that period of the fight must have been indeed great. I'm afraid that many of us on this occasion did not sufficiently appreciate the glory of victory, or attach sufficient importance or reverence to the fact that the ground on which we trod was the scene of the one English success during the whole war ; perhaps it was that we were in a glib humour that morning, and inclined to ridicule everybody and everything, or it may have been that our ride had made us hungry, and that we were eager for luncheon. Be it as it may, we lost no time in obeying Sir Evelyn's order to mount ; and following the General, who started off at a gallop, Zwart Kop and farm disappeared from view,—probably, as we were returning to Pretoria by another road, never to be seen again.

A ride of twenty minutes through a wild rugged country, in which the kraals of the Bapede tribes were thickly scattered about, brought us to the farm of one Senõr Don Malmapius, a Portuguese gentleman, with whom Sir Evelyn had arranged to halt for luncheon that day. I think the worthy

Don was somewhat staggered at the numbers that sought his hospitality; but this is only a surmise, and, if he was, he certainly proved equal to the occasion, as the plentiful and luxurious spread to which we sat down testified. A tame quagga¹ which he kept running about loose was very persistent in its efforts to prevent our entering the house, and it was not until it received a stern reproof from its master that it at last desisted in its interfering attempts. After a bit,* however, we became great friends, and I would gladly have accepted it as a gift—for, as such, our host was good enough to offer it to me—had not the extreme difficulty of getting it down-country presented itself as an almost insurmountable barrier; in addition to which it appeared to me little less than cruelty to remove it from a home to which it evidently was greatly attached. All thought therefore of taking the insinuating little beast with me had to be at once relinquished.

Luncheon was served as soon as we entered the house, and I must confess that we did it justice. There was a great assemblage of good things on the table, and our hospitable host was very pressing that we should partake of them all. He was gifted, too, with an immense fund of

¹ Small kind of zebra.

conversation ; so that, while we satisfied our appetite, he carried on the principal burden, enlivening us with much information and many an anecdote about the Boer leaders and the Boer people in general, to whom he seemed much attached. He had remained on his farm throughout the whole length of the recent disturbances, and assured us that he had been neither molested nor annoyed in any way. At this, we ventured to express an opinion that there was small cause for wonder, it being hardly probable that they would attempt to annoy so devoted and friendly a partizan.

Luncheon finished, we strolled outside, where Walkinshaw was found awaiting us with the horses. In batches of twos and threes we mounted, and, bidding farewell to our courteous host, rode slowly along the winding track which pointed for Pretoria. It was a different road from that we had come by in the morning, which relieved the ride of any monotony which "glimpses of oft recurring scenes" sometimes engenders. Another halt occurred ere long at the farm of one of the name of *Muntz*, with whom I believe Sir Evelyn had had previous acquaintance. While he was engaged in renewing it, Captain Slade, Mr. Hamilton, and myself amused ourselves by despoiling a

heavily-burdened orange tree of its treasures. The large golden fruit was too tempting to resist, and we refreshed ourselves thereon with few pangs of conscience.

The remainder of that day's ride we took easily enough, frequent stoppages occurring for the purpose of stalking pow, or coran, or even partridge. Though we only possessed one rifle between us, that was found ample for the requirements of the party; and although we were unsuccessful in securing any game, we made up for it by shooting a jackal, which, unlike those found farther south and in the Cape Colony resembling a fox, had all the appearance in shape, colour, and markings of a young hyena. The distant view of Pretoria, nestling in a hollow, and surrounded on all sides by ranges of hills, was very striking; these, bathed in the glow of a magnificent sunset, brought to mind the fabled golden mountains of the far west, and magnified the beauty of a naturally impressive scene. Imaginary visions, born from the flashes of departing rays, would flit across the mountains, seeking refuge in the valleys below; and it was not until another day had worn its wrinkle on the brow of time, and the gloom of evening settled on all around, that these flitting shadows vanished, bearing with them

their wealth of imagination and wondrous store of dreams, and we all, having enjoyed our day's ride, might have been seen entering Pretoria. We found Sir Hercules in the verandah, with his military secretary, Major St. John, and Mr. St. Leger Herbert, awaiting our return. A misgiving that we should be late for dinner was doubtless the cause of Sir Hercules' anxiety, from which by our appearance he was relieved. Half an hour's law was given for dressing. To many this was a serious business, though to us two it consisted simply in indulging in a warm bath each, during which our things underwent a good brushing at the hands of Tom. They were then brought back again, and took the place of evening dress. Poor faded garments, their well-worn appearance looked hardly presentable next to the brilliant uniforms worn by Captain Slade and others! but then Sir Evelyn dressed more simply, which helped to keep them a little in countenance.

CHAPTER XVI.

THE ROYAL COMMISSION—SECRECY—A NATIVE DEPUTATION—
THE BLACK MAN'S PRAYER—THE WONDERBOOM—A STRONG
POSITION—IN FAIRYLAND—THE LAST NIGHT.

THE business of the Royal Commission was resumed next day, the greater part of the morning being occupied in the discussion of its affairs. A scene of bustle and activity, with business and importance pervading the atmosphere, was the attendant result. Newcomers kept arriving at every moment, and, a little late on the scene, President Brand and Meinheer Joubert made their appearance. They were ushered at once into the apartment which was respectively called the drawing-room, sitting-room, or Royal Commission room, as it suited the occupiers to term it; and soon the buzz and hum of many voices came floating forth through the open windows on to the verandah, in which I had comfortably ensconced myself, outside the pale, to rest and watch proceedings. Now and then some one from within

would close the windows abruptly, which impressed me with the supposition that a matter of intense importance was about to be discussed. These discussions, however, generally proved of short duration ; or it may have been that the inmates of the room of many names felt the atmosphere too confined and stuffy to permit of a lengthened discussion, for the windows which had aided to withhold the secret from the outside air would be as suddenly thrown open, and out once more would float the buzz and hum of many tongues, presumably those of her Majesty's Royal Commissioners. A few hours so spent were decidedly pleasant. It seemed almost as though the buzz and hum was the result of some machinery, set going for the purpose of lulling one to sleep ; anyhow, it had that effect, and soon the busy scene without, the animated discussion within, seemed to fade and die away,—darkness took the place of light as I indulged in a comfortable siesta.

What my dreams were I cannot say, though the tail end of them I am able to recall. Cannon thundered, Boers advanced from all sides, and the measured tread of soldiers echoed around. It was somewhat disappointing to awake and find that the excitement consequent on scenes such as

I have described had vanished, that the cannon was nothing but the spasmodic cough of old President Brand close by, and that the martial tread of soldiers was the result of the shuffling of many feet caused by the departing attendants of the Commissioners. The only way in which the Boer advance could be accounted for was in the fact that on opening my eyes I encountered those of Joubert fixed upon me. He was doubtless meditating a polite salutation and speech in English ere he advanced, and was getting together his stock of knowledge in that line for the occasion. I, however, saved him all further trouble and hesitation by rising and shaking hands, after which I turned my attention to President Brand.

After a short conversation the old gentleman took his departure, and the Boer leaders proceeded to follow his example. Silence and quiet appeared to be falling over and around Government House, unless it were for the noisy scratching of a pen which seemed to be racing along with its work in the office of the General close by. By whom it was wielded I did not attempt to discover, but in all probability by that hard-working, indefatigable specimen of a military secretary, Major Fraser. Just as silence and quiet appeared established,

another hum, distant at first, but coming nearer and nearer, smote upon my ear. While I was wondering whence it proceeded, the gateway entrance to Government House became black with dusky forms, behind which a large crowd seemed to be pressing. From Captain Slade, who at this moment made his appearance dragging some half-dozen chairs after him, which he proceeded to arrange in a line on the verandah opposite the steps leading down into the carriage-drive, I learnt that the cause of so many black figures in the gateway was a native deputation which Sir Evelyn was about to receive. About three hundred of them were ushered into the grounds, and squatted down on the carriage-drive opposite the row of chairs. They were all chiefs, or representatives of chiefs, occupying territory around Pretoria and under the protectorate of England. One old man, who seemed the chief of most importance in the whole deputation, had a small wooden, three-legged stool, such as dairy-maids use in England when milking cows. This stool was entrusted to the care of a young lad, whose proud duty it appeared to be to carry it while attending to his aged master. The greatest difficulty seemed to be experienced by the old man in retaining his seat, and had it not been for

the steady hands of his attendant I am convinced he would have fallen back on several occasions. While I was engaged in watching his painful struggles to maintain a dignified bearing on this cranky little stool, Sir Evelyn made his appearance, accompanied by Mr. Osborne, the British Resident of Zululand, and a Mr. Guerdon, who had arrived from England to undertake the duties of Assistant Finance Commissioner to the Royal Commission. As soon as we had all seated ourselves one of the Kaffirs, who appeared to be the spokesman of the deputation, began his harangue. It lasted some time, and was interpreted to Sir Evelyn by a white gentleman present. The substance of the remarks which flowed so eloquently from the black chief's lips was to the effect that the important body of black rulers present had assembled to tender a strong protest against the threatened act of the English Government to restore the Transvaal to the Boers. Very distinctly and very plainly it was pointed out that, did we—the only people to whom they would acknowledge allegiance—so commit ourselves, the result would not be long in showing itself, and that result would be bloodshed and anarchy. Their past fidelity was also advanced as a plea against our surrendering them to such a

fate, and the harangue ended with an earnest prayer that England would not forsake them, because they had been loyal and devoted.

To this petition Sir Evelyn returned a soothing reply, it being no easy matter to inform them of their future fate until the Royal Commission had finished sitting. He, however, requested the deputation to wait upon him again in a month's time, when a more definite and comprehensive answer would be given them. This filled the poor fellows with hope, and, still trusting in the good faith of the country for which they entertained both affection and respect, with the salutation "Inkos" they took their departure. I was not present a month later, when they assembled to learn that the gratitude of nations is as fickle and wavering as that of kings, but the account which an eyewitness gave me I have no doubt faithfully represented the scene. In the string of laws laid down for their better protection they read their own doom—what to them was a long list of meaningless commands given to their future rulers, who, the moment our backs were turned, would set them at defiance? Suffice it, they learnt that the country to which they had been loyal had deserted them, and knew at last that the protection of their lands and simple homes

must for the future be relegated to their own means and powers of defence. The result of this policy they too surely predicted; and even as I write this we hear daily of the unrest and disquiet which is agitating the Transvaal, and detect in these rumours the first rumblings of a great storm.

The business of the morning being over, and lunch disposed of, a large party of us accompanied Sir Evelyn, General Bellairs, and Colonel Gildea on a ride to visit the Wonderboom Pass or Poort, which lies six miles north of Pretoria. The natural strength of this position is immense, consisting as it does of a narrow gorge, commanded on either side by high rocky hills. A newly-constructed road runs through the pass, but ere it was made, the only passage through for waggons consisted in the bed of the river Apies, which, though by no means deep, is nevertheless very rough and stony, and must have proved difficult travelling both for man and beast. It was on the summit of these hills that the large gathering of baboons, mistaken by the outposts for advancing Boers, took place during the war; but either they were taking their afternoon siesta, or had trekked altogether from these scenes of war, for on this occasion, though we kept a sharp look-out, we never saw any.

Away to the eastward before entering the pass we could make out the Nek Road, across which the Boers built a stone breastwork as a means of defence, and occupied it. They thus held the only two means of communication with the country north of the Wonderboom Poort, and, in addition, a laager of some twenty waggons on the right bank of the Apies River, still farther north, was selected as their headquarters.

The ride through the pass was exceedingly grand, the gaunt rocky heights overlooking us on either side like two defying demons about to fall and crush us with their massive weight. Trees and ferns grew everywhere luxuriantly, and the gurgling of the river over its rocky bed was a pleasant and soothing sound, which added to the charm of an impressive; an awe-inspiring scene. But one of the principal sights which we were bent on seeing that day was the great Wonderboom or Wonderful Tree, which had grown and extended to such a size as to give it this appellation. Under its wondrous canopy several hundred people, it was said, could find shelter, and indeed, when we had threaded the pass and skirted a reedy lake from which the cry of the wild duck arose, the tree, with its heavy massive foliage, hove in sight, looking like some huge

giant amidst the comparatively dwarf vegetation that surrounded it. Putting spurs to our horses, several of us raced to reach the spot first, which foolish exploit under a hot sun made both ourselves and our horses very hot, and rendered the dark, cool shade of the great tree doubly acceptable and refreshing. Examination proved it to be of an ambitious and progressive nature, the larger branches, as soon as they become developed, drooping earthwards, until, taking root, fresh life springs forth from the younger scions of the old stem. We regretted that we had not started on our ride earlier in the day, and sent on our lunch to this delightful spot, where a very pleasant picnic might have been organised; as it was we were very thirsty, and the river Apies lay too far off to return for the purpose of slaking our thirst. We were forced, therefore, to patiently await a convenient opportunity, and proceeded to follow the Generals, who had already, bearing to the eastward, commenced the ascent of the narrow, steep, and rocky path which led over the Nek mentioned by me on a former page. In single file we scrambled after each other, the horses slipping and stumbling over the rough uneven ground; altogether we had our hands full for a short time in trying to keep them

on their legs, as well as in doing our best to avoid losing our eyes in the thorny branches which overhung the path. On reaching the summit of the Nek we paused to give the horses their wind, the while making an inspection of the stone breastworks thrown up by the Boers during their occupation of the pass. The position was decidedly a strong one, and the enemy must have felt pretty safe in their mountain fastness; they could afford to be arrogant, placed as they were, secure from the assaults of man.

A pleasant ride home in the cool of the evening brought another day to its conclusion, and regretfully we recalled to mind that the time was fast approaching when we must leave these scenes of comparative luxury and ease for the sterner realities of the daily march and its attendant hardships. The dinner hour generally banished, however, these disagreeable thoughts; guests we never lacked to make the party a large and festive one, and these few hours of relaxation from diplomacy and hard work were as much appreciated by the Royal Commissioners themselves as they were by the rest of us.

So the days flew by all too quickly, varied by rides, lawn tennis, polo, and other amusements. On the last of our stay I rode with my husband,

Major Fraser, and Captain Slade, to a place a few miles out of Pretoria, in search of ferns and flowers wherewith to decorate the dinner table for a farewell banquet. There were to be a bishop and a Roman Catholic priest and all manner of important personages to grace the board that night, and our worthy aide-de-camp was anxious that no pains should be spared to make everything a success. It was quite the prettiest ride of the many we had taken around Pretoria, and it was hard to dispossess one's self of the idea that one had been transported to the tropical regions, so rich and varied was the vegetation. In a snug little avenue redolent with the scent of a kind of wild honeysuckle we dismounted, and having made our horses fast, proceeded to push our way through the thick jungle, bent on expeditions of discovery. It was not long before Captain Slade and myself had made good progress, and it was with a simultaneous exclamation of delight that we suddenly emerged from the brushwood of the jungle on to a green open space, which might well have vied with the most carefully kept lawn in England. Gradually as we advanced over this green sward it became studded with lemon and orange trees, until at last we found ourselves in a thick, shady grove

formed almost entirely of these trees, all being heavily loaded with masses of their yellow and golden fruits. Not far off a winding lane of canes and weeping willows betokened the close proximity of water, whose murmurings and gurgling sounds could also be distinguished as it splashed along over the stones of its rough and winding course. Along the banks ferns of all kinds and descriptions grew in abundance, the maidenhair carrying away—so I thought—the palm for size and beauty. We could now hear the shouts of our companions, who were endeavouring to ascertain our whereabouts, so with answering shouts we guided them to the lovely little spot to which we laid claim as discoverers, and on their arrival pressed them into our service as fern gatherers. It was not long, though not without one or two wettings, before we managed to lay in a good store of the required article; after which we amused ourselves after the manner of children in pelting each other with fallen lemons and oranges. Assaults and counter-assaults began to wax somewhat hot, until a well-directed shot from Major Fraser having landed full, straight, and with some force, in the right eye of Captain Slade, put our side *hors de combat*, and we surrendered without any further struggle;

Lemon Grove was taken, and its discoverers made prisoners !

Gathering together our spoils, we returned to where we had left the horses, and made our way back to Pretoria by a different route, arriving just in time to decorate the table with the ferns and flowers which we had collected that day.

The dinner was quite a success, and I am sure the bishop and the Catholic priest and the other guests must have enjoyed themselves, for they lingered on some time after it was all over, and did not seem inclined to take their departure. But they went at last, when we turned our attention to arranging plans for an early start on the morrow ; our last day at Pretoria had come to an end, and the long and weary trekking was to commence once more.

We then learnt from Captain Slade that Sir Evelyn had sent our horses on that day in the charge of an orderly to a wayside inn twenty miles on the road to Heidelberg, and that Sir Hercules Robinson had kindly placed his spider at our service to take us thus far, thereby giving our horses the advantage of a night's rest and twenty miles off their journey next day. This we regarded as a very satisfactory arrangement ; and having settled everything with a view to as

much comfort as possible, bed was next talked of as the right place in contemplation of an early rise on the morrow. In the office hard by Sir Evelyn and Major Fraser were closeted at their work, and as we did not like to disturb them, we went to our rooms without saying good-bye, counselling Walkinshaw on the way to be sure and call us at daybreak next morning.

CHAPTER XVII.

DEPARTURE — AN EARLY BREAKFAST — AN UNCOMFORTABLE
DRIVE — A SIMPLE MEAL — PATAGONIA ONCE MORE —
HEIDELBERG AT LAST—A DRUNKEN CONVOY—STANDERTON
ONCE MORE — AN ALARM OF “BOERS” — LUDICROUS
THEFTS—MEMORIES OF MAJUBA.

IT was with feelings of regret and a strong disinclination to arise, that I awoke with the dull gray hours of early morning. Never before had a bed felt so comfortable, and with a sigh I recollected that the time had come for these luxuries to be ended. A knock at the door and the voice of Walkinshaw informing me that it was half-past four, had a beneficial effect, however, and the weakness of the past few moments became dissipated as I sprang from my bed and commenced the operation of dressing. Outside my door I found hot water placed and a cup of hot chocolate, the result of Walkinshaw's kindly forethought, all ready to hand. It was with some difficulty that my husband could be induced to

understand the necessity of rising, the terrible truth that a long day's journey lay before him taking some time to dawn upon his sleepy thoughts. When, however, he eventually woke to the fact, I am bound to acknowledge that sloth was at once banished, and a little after five o'clock saw us ready for the start.

At the gates of Government House stood Sir Hercules's spider, with its eight mules ready harnessed and in waiting. An intense silence hung over Pretoria; the whole town was buried in sleep; not a bird's twitter could even be heard, and silently as possible, so as not to disturb anyone within, I made my way from my room to the verandah, thence into the dining-room, where hot coffee and chocolate were ready for any one who required them. It was too early to eat, but a cup of hot chocolate is not a thing to be despised on a cold morning, and we both accordingly indulged in one. While so doing General Wood and Captain Slade made their appearance, our courteous host informing us that he could not let us depart without seeing us off and wishing us a God-speed on our journey. It was with no little difficulty that we scrambled into the curiously-shaped vehicle, which was to convey us twenty miles on our way before joining our horses.

Captain Slade had called it a spider, but to me it much resembled a prison van! Shaped like one it certainly was, with the exception that the two drivers and the mules could be distinguished at the far end, which gave us a sort of idea in which direction we were going.

The luncheon, or rather breakfast basket, having been handed in after us, and received with due care, everything was ready for a start. Farewells were exchanged with our host and Captain Slade, in the midst of which the ponderous whip cracked forth its admonishing sound to the mules, and, rumbling and jolting over the uneven road, we were once more wanderers.

After half an hour spent in the vehicle I fully appreciated the remark Sir Hercules had made, when he observed that the journey from Newcastle to Pretoria was a very wearisome one. Poor man! there can be little doubt of it, and I pitied him all the more when I reflected that the return journey was still before him. Lazier mules I never sat behind, and the same remark might be applied to the drivers. At the end of every five miles they expressed a wish to outspan, and even when, after six hours' weary jolting, we at length sighted the storehouse where our horses awaited us, the driver could

scarcely be induced to proceed until he had outspanned and rested the mules for an hour. By dint, however, of threats and promises we managed to get him to proceed. In six hours we had barely accomplished twenty miles, and a long distance yet separated us from Heidelberg; it was necessary to push forward with all possible speed; the road was a lonely and desolate one, and we had no Mr. Latour on this occasion to act as our guide and interpreter. It was with real feelings of thankfulness that we at length came to a stop, and, descending from our uncomfortable seats in the mule vehicle, found Tom ready waiting us with the horses. We did not envy the orderly who had helped him to bring them thus far his return ride in the spider, and many times we congratulated ourselves on the termination of our drive.

• On mounting our animals, we found that the horse ridden by my husband was very lame in the near hind foot. The day of his arrival in Pretoria he had trodden on a sharp nail, which became imbedded in a tender part of the hoof. Though it was at once extracted, and the wound attended to on the following day by the General's blacksmith, it still continued tender and painful; and, in spite of the week's rest, he seemed none

the sounder. This was extremely annoying, as the animal was the strongest we had with us, and a speedy and successful journey greatly depended upon his staying powers. There was, however, nothing for it but to change horses ; so, relinquishing my mount on "Nancy," doubtless much to her horror—for there is some material difference between eight and fifteen stone—I got on to the lame horse, and bidding farewell to our lazy coachman and his equally lazy mules, we were off on the trek once more.

A ride of forty miles on a horse lame behind is decidedly no joke, as I was not long in finding out. The poor beast was doubtless in great pain, and his canter was rough beyond all description. Each time the injured foot touched the ground, a jarr ran through my whole body, and before long I began to feel quite exhausted. Though I felt very sorry for myself, I was still more so for the horse. He was a brave animal, and performed his task pluckily and well ; but the profuse way in which he sweated testified to the greatness of his sufferings, and we were unable to push along at more than five miles an hour in consequence. At four o'clock, when we called a halt, we had only ridden twenty miles, and the same distance still lay between us and Heidelberg, which we calcu-

lated we should not reach much before nine o'clock that night.

Water, too, was scarce in the part of the country through which we were passing. Vast dried-up stretching plains, on which few living things could be distinguished, extended on either side far as the eye could reach, bearing all the appearance of a great desert. On the Lys Vley, a small offshoot stream of Riet Spruit, we stopped to off-saddle. The horses were much distressed for want of water, and we, who in our hurry to start had forgotten the contents of the luncheon-basket, which the lazy drivers and the orderly at that moment were doubtless enjoying, began to feel decided pangs of hunger. Fortunately, we possessed a few pieces of bread, on which we proceeded to make our luncheon, while the horses slaked their thirst and enjoyed their roll in the dust, wandering hither and thither in search of a few mouthfuls of young grass. A Dutch trader on the trek arrived while we were resting ourselves, and outspanned close by. It was the first sign of human existence we had seen since parting with our mule conveyance that morning; and though we did not enter into conversation or exchange salutations even with the man, who appeared a sour, sulky-looking fellow, the presence which he and his

waggon and his oxen brought, not to mention two savage dogs who were continually on the bark, was welcome enough, and dissipated the silence which seemed to have taken possession of the barren Veldt.

Three quarters of an hour's law having been given the horses, they were then driven up and packs and saddles replaced. This job occupied about a quarter of an hour, and at five o'clock we started on our last stage that day. A very weary one it proved too, the poor beast I was riding going lamèr than ever, so that from discomfort it became positive pain to ride him.

For some time a distant range of hills ahead of us had engaged our attention, and from our bearings I made them out to be a portion of the Zuikerbosch Rand or range, on the other side of which I knew Heidelberg and the district bearing the same name would lie. Anxiously and eagerly we kept our eyes on these hills, now and then giving vent to the would-be cheering impression that they appeared to grow larger. Riet Spruit was crossed, and as this was the last opportunity of obtaining water before reaching Heidelberg that we knew of, the horses were permitted to slake their thirst, while we followed their example. It was at this place that, for the

first time during my wanderings over the South African Veldt, I sighted in the distance two wild ostriches. The old instincts of the Patagonian chase seemed to return, and I could hardly restrain myself from turning my horse from his course and dashing after them. The reflection, however, came in time that such a chase would be not only useless and unavailing, but that by law it was also forbidden. The strictest rules were in force in the Colony against shooting or destroying the wild ostrich, and though by stealth these rules were occasionally infringed upon, they had the timely effect of preserving from complete destruction the few that remained of this magnificent and noble bird.

All this time we were riding a race with the sun, the result of which was already a foregone conclusion. Steadily it had descended on to the western range of the Zuikerbosch, and we watched the multifarious and gorgeous lights which it eliminated steal along the brow and slopes of those western hills. Every little cranny and nook appeared revealed, and the architecture of the rocks bade fair to rival in their domes and spiral heights the most exquisite works of man. Here, apparently, an old castle of bygone days, associated with the scenes and deeds of those

olden times, would set the imagination stirring, peopling it with knights and squires and men-at-arms, bidding defiance from the donjon keep to their assailants ; now a stately Gothic pile would arise on the fading ruins of that transient scene, and with it the mind would turn from the thought of angry strife and gallant deeds to wander in the dark silent cloisters of that sacred pile, while the harmony of Mozart or the thrilling beauty of Beethoven rings through the dome, floods every corner of that vast building, and, stealing forth on the evening air, wafts its sweet message to the God from whose gift of feeling it was first conceived and shadowed forth in the work of man. As the sun sinks lower, purple shades steal along those varying scenes—the delicately-tinted rose, the palest green, the softest opal, transform those rugged rocks into living glittering gems. Far and wide they flash their brilliancy around ; and then, as the author of their being passes on to flood another land with light, they fade gently, swiftly from the scene, dying where their life-giver has vanished,—dying but to arise again in the presence where death is unknown.

Dreaming in this wise, I watched the sun go down, and with its disappearance the cold chill of evening at once set in. Every moment it grew

darker, and we experienced the greatest difficulty in finding our way. Ten good miles yet lay before us, and we calculated that nothing under two hours would be occupied in accomplishing that distance. Even if the horses had not been tired we could not have pushed along any faster, as it was impossible to see where we were going to, and we had to leave it chiefly to the instinct of these sagacious beasts to find their own way. About eight o'clock the moon rose, when we became better off, and were able to increase the pace a little; and it was with real delight that an hour later, just as we were beginning to despair of even reaching Heidelberg, a turn in a winding hill brought us in sight of the town. We quickly made our way to the hotel, which to our chagrin we found again crowded with noisy, dirty Boers; so, procuring some oats and mealies, we rode on to the outskirts of the place, and, off-saddling close to a little stream, ministered to the wants of the horses. While I fed and blanketed them up for the night—making them as comfortable as possible under the circumstances—my husband and Tom got a fire to light, and we were soon enjoying some hot coffee. It was too late to eat, and though we had had nothing but a piece of bread each that day, we all felt more inclined to lie

down and sleep than eat. For myself, I felt utterly exhausted, which I put down to the roughness of the lame horse I had been riding. We had placed, however, sixty miles between Pretoria and ourselves, and on the whole it was considered a matter of congratulation that we had managed so far so successfully. It was ten o'clock when, rolling myself up in my blanket, I lay down close to the horses. The bed was certainly a contrast to the one at Government House, Pretoria, and I found myself ruefully contrasting the same. The ground was also decidedly damp and spongy, and I had grave misgivings of rheumatism, and all manner of evils, in consequence; but sleep soon banished these fears from my mind, and the potent effect of weariness made rest in any shape or form acceptable. It must have been past midnight when I was awakened by the shouts and unmusical songs of some drunken Kaffirs and Boers, who were passing close to the place where we were sleeping. Behind them rumbled an unwieldy waggon, drawn by a large span of oxen, which brought the conclusion to my mind that they were on a night trek—a custom which is frequently practised by the connoisseurs of the country in these parts—the cool hours of night being considered better travelling for the oxen than during

the heat of the daytime. The moon being well up, I could make out that the animals had neither a forelouper nor a driver to guide them, and, as they passed close to me, I found myself wondering how far this drunken convoy would effect a safe journey. Probably the first awkward spruit arrived at, a catastrophe would occur which would have the potent effect of bringing them to their senses.

On turning my attention to renewed sleep, I found that the place I had selected for my bed was, without doubt, a veritable swamp. The blanket in which I had rolled myself up was wringing wet, and I lay in a regular pool of water. Picking myself out of my damp couch, I proceeded to make search for a more suitable spot, which I at length discovered; but though it was dry, it was decidedly hard, and afforded but scant comfort to my aching bones.

Five o'clock on the following morning saw us ready to renew our journey. My mount of the previous day we found in a sad condition, and quite unfit to bear any kind of weight. He was therefore adjudged the comparatively easy task of carrying a portion of our light packs, the sumpter animal being handed over to Tom as his mount for that day. I was glad to return to the easy

and confidential amble of my little Punch, who stood ready waiting, sleek and fat and consequential, but rather sulky-looking, though none the worse for his journey of the day before. He had need, however, of freshness, as a distance of quite sixty miles at the least separated us from Standerton, which we desired to reach that day, being unaware as to the exact movements of the troops, who we calculated would be due about the same time from Potchefstroom.

Sixteen miles on the road, we off-saddled at "The Grange," a store belonging to one MacHattie, and the scene of one of our former encampments on the march up-country with the troops. While the horses contentedly munched their oat hay in a large, cool stable, we in turn sat down to a cosy little breakfast of eggs and bacon, and some excellent tea, with real cream. This was the first regular meal we had indulged in for over forty hours, and we appreciated it accordingly. The next stage was a long one to Bushman's River, the scene of that dangerous hunting-day on our march up-country, when everybody endeavoured to do their best to shoot each other! The memory of it had evidently not forsaken the breasts of our four-footed brethren in peril, for of the large herds that had been seen on our way

up, but a few solitary representatives remained. Further inland they had probably wandered, seeking refuge from the devastating hand of man.

We reached Standerton that night tired enough, but to find a tent and many luxuries prepared for us by my cousin. The troops had not yet arrived from Potchefstroom, so that our waggon was of course not forthcoming; but we made ourselves comfortable with the property of others, and were not sorry for a few days' rest, both for our horses' sakes as well as our own. The poor lame animal was at once relegated to the care of the farrier-sergeant, and the foot placed in a poultice; but for many days, weeks—even months—after this period, he continued lame and unfit for use of any kind; and it was not until long after I had left South Africa that I heard he had been sold to an officer in the Inniskillings, one of the unfortunate victims condemned to remain in Natal after the departure of the troops. Even then, I believe, he went feeling, and it will probably be long ere the poor beast forgets the sorrows of that 120 miles ride.

Two days after our arrival at Standerton, the troops made their appearance. For several days they had been wandering about the Veldt, having

lost their way. The plan had been to return to Standerton by a different road from that by which they had come; and the consequence resulted in a good deal of time being lost, and the short cut which they had counted on making proving a very long one. Misfortunes never come singly, and in one of their bivouacks, the horses of the Inniskillings got amongst some poisonous herbage, the result being seventeen dead in one night, and many mules dead and dying. General Buller lost two of these latter animals out of his span, one of them trotting into Standerton, and right up to our very tents, where it proceeded to lie down and die. Everything was done to save the poor beast; but nothing availed, its sides became inflated like a balloon, and its death must have been of a most painful nature.

Two other incidents which occurred about this period created no little stir and a good deal of amusement. The first of these excitements was caused by the suspicious disappearance of General Buller's interpreter, who had separated himself from the troops on their start that morning for Standerton, with the avowed object of searching for game. Several hours passed away, and the mid-day outspan took place; but with it nothing was seen of the missing man, and on the arrival

of the squadron at Standerton he was still absent. As every one was busily engaged pitching their tents, and getting the camp into order, the interpreter came suddenly galloping into the midst of the busy scene. He was pale and excited, and looked very frightened. In reply to the numerous questions which were pressed upon him from all sides as to what had occurred to upset him so much, he managed to stammer out a disjointed and almost incoherent tale in which "Boers" and "prisoner" were the only words that could be rightly distinguished. Under the soothing influence of a strong drink, he became more calm, and thereupon proceeded to relate how he had, while stalking a blesbôk, suddenly fallen in with a large force of 300 armed Boers, from whom he sought to escape by flight. He was, however, pursued, captured, and brought back a prisoner. The leader of this formidable party asked him many questions about the troops that had been to Potchefstroom, and those that garrisoned Standerton, to which he affirmed he returned evasive replies, and, watching his opportunity, managed later on to effect his escape. His story at first caused no little excitement in camp; but on reflection it appeared so improbable, that every one at length came to the conclusion

that it was nothing but an invention, and the poor fellow had to bear a good deal of chaff and bullying in consequence. He, however, stuck to his statement like a man, continuing to assert its veracity; and not long after, in a conversation with one who had been a rebel Boer, I learned that such a force, about that time, had been posted in the neighbourhood of Standerton, with orders to watch the movements of the marching squadrons, and report thereon to the authorities in and about Pretoria.

The other incident which occurred, though disgraceful in itself, had its ludicrous side as well. A Boer farmer arrived at headquarters, bringing a complaint to Colonel Curtis to the effect that his farmhouse had been broken into and rifled by a party of soldiers. Acting upon information received, the Colonel caused every tent to be examined, and the kit of each man inspected, when, in several of them, many strange articles of wearing apparel, from babies' stockings to women's petticoats, were discovered. One man who had secured and slaughtered a pig had concealed it in his blankets; a young Inniskilling had congratulated himself on having secured a gun; and a gay hussar had laid in a stock of ladies' clothing to his complete satisfaction. Knives,

forks, and spoons, were discovered, and unearthed from their hiding-places; and when the whole of the stolen articles were at length recovered, they presented a curious and ludicrous spectacle indeed. Not the least laughable matter of the whole affair was the joy of the farmer on beholding his stolen property, and when his claim for £60 damages was acknowledged by a donation of £40 down, his delight knew no bounds. A Kaffir was at once despatched in search of a waggon, and the last thing seen of our injured friend was his little, fat body, perched on the top of his household goods, awaiting the arrival of the vehicle which was to bear back to his rifled home his recovered property. The perpetrators of the outrage were of course at once placed under arrest.

That evening a telegram arrived from Sir Evelyn Wood at Pretoria to General Buller, requesting the latter's presence in the capital of the Transvaal. Captain Beresford likewise received instructions to repair in the same direction, and hurried preparations were accordingly made to get everything in readiness for an early start next day. The troops also had been ordered to march down-country, and with them we decided to remain, returning at once to Newcastle. It was

with no little joy that we bade farewell to Standerton; few, or rather none, were the regrets which we left behind, and it is to be acknowledged that we did not envy the unfortunate 94th Regiment, who remained to garrison the place. Proceeding down-country at a slower rate than that at which we had marched up, the fifth day of our departure from Standerton found us encamped under the south-eastern slopes of the Amajuba, and close to O'Neill's Farm. At this place we halted a day for the men to clean, pipeclay, and smarten themselves up for their triumphant return from so many dangers! Once more I climbed the Amajuba, and found the graves in tidiness and order. It was my farewell visit to these scenes of exceeding sadness, and I lingered for a long time ere I could make up my mind to quit them. There was something irresistibly fascinating in this spot; the clear, free air, the vast panorama extending over many lands, and the sense of loneliness and isolation with which the height and steepness of the mountain impressed me, made it a scene that, once viewed, will never be forgotten. Lying on a projecting rock which overlooked the wooded western slopes, and the fair and fertile valley below, I found myself recapitulating the tragedy

which, a few short months before, had been enacted thereon, and living over again in imagination the hopes, and fears, and vain regrets which must have filled the hearts of those who fought and fell that day. Looking ahead, the future must ever remain veiled; but in whatever lands I shall wander, amidst whatever novel scenes I shall find myself, the memory of that vast, silent pile will never be forgotten. Beyond all memory, however, it will stand; and long after the thoughts of generations shall have passed away, a fit monument it will ever remain to memorialise the gallant dead who sleep upon its summit and beneath its shades. A short march was made next day, and we halted once more at the Ingogo. Here another day's rest was given the men, which every one grumbled at, and seemed to consider unnecessary; but the fact of its being Sunday probably accounted for the order, and every one was forced to while away the day as best he could, and after his own fashion. On Monday, the 4th of July, the final march was made, and that afternoon saw us encamped in our old quarters at Bennett's Drift.

CHAPTER XVIII.

A PROJECTED RIDE THROUGH ZULULAND—A FORBIDDEN EXPEDITION — AN AMUSING DISCUSSION — MILITARY HOSPITALITY — A BOER'S SLAVE — THE SLAVE'S GRATITUDE — ROUGH TRAVELLING — DE BEER'S PASS — CLIMBING THE DRAKENSBERG — CROSSING THE BOUNDARY — MUSIC HAS CHARMS.

A FEW days spent in camp at Bennett's Drift were sufficient to weary the most patient of people, and the utter want and complete absence of anything to do soon goaded us to fresh action. At first a return to Pretoria was contemplated in order to obtain news of the progress of the Royal Commission; but that project was no sooner made than abandoned in favour of a more seasonable plan which occurred to us of a ride through Zululand. This having been decided upon, an early date was fixed for our departure, and the few preparations needed for the journey were gone through; but at the last moment an objection to our entering the country was put forward by

General Buller, who sent word of news that moment received from John Dunn, relative to an outbreak in the Umlandela district, which the white chief appeared to think would spread. Under the circumstances, it was deemed advisable that our visit should be deferred, and a telegram from Sir Evelyn Wood which I received, and in which he gave it as his opinion that it would not be advisable to proceed to Zululand, left me no choice but to accede to the wishes of the General. It was, however, with extreme reluctance that I did so, and the disappointment was at the time very keen.

Something, however, we felt must be done to pass the time until the sitting of the Royal Commission terminated, and the General returned to Newcastle. Wild ideas of rushing off to Basutoland several times flashed through my mind; but the plan, on reflection, appeared unfeasible in consequence of the time it would have occupied; and the prospect of a probable march ere long into Zululand helped to deter me from any further serious contemplation of the project.

In the midst of this uncertainty as to what was to be done, the suggestion which came from my husband to visit the Kimberley Diamond Fields was hailed as a solution and settlement of the

difficulty. True, they lay many hundreds of miles distant; but what is distance in South Africa? and to Kimberley we resolved to go. This decision arrived at, I immediately rode into Newcastle, and telegraphed down-country to Maritzburg to Captain Hallam Parr, begging him to secure two seats in the post-cart which would leave in a few days for Harrismith, and which we could join at a place called the Rising Sun, about twelve miles the other side of Lady-smith.

On the following morning behold us once more mounted, and in readiness for a fresh start, Punch and Nancy being the mounts. A chestnut pony whom we called "Fatty Cavendish" was entrusted with the saddle bags and horse rugs, which were all that composed the pack on this occasion. This pony held the position of second favourite in Punch's heart, and he was accordingly very pleased and contented at finding the two objects of his dearest affections trotting alongside him.

We were accompanied for the first few miles of our way by several friends who rode so far to see us off. Outside Newcastle we separated; they returning to their different camps, while we proceeded on the trek.

At the Ingagane, twenty-two miles on the road, we made the first off-saddle for breakfast, thence continuing on another stage of similar distance to the Biggarsberg. But on arriving we found the hotel in dirtiness and discomfort, in no way improved from that in which we had discovered it on a previous occasion, so, hardening our hearts for an extension of that day's journey, we pushed on for Sunday's River, distant thirteen miles. The difference made in a long journey by knowing the road is wonderful. Fifty-seven miles we had ridden that day, but neither ourselves nor our horses were in any way fatigued, though we had come along at a pretty good pace. We found comfortable quarters awaiting us at Sunday's River, a good dinner and soft beds, and everything clean and airy. The proprietor, Mr. Mitchell Innis, was at home, as was also his indefatigable housekeeper, an old lady of ninety years of age, who was trotting about superintending the affairs of the establishment, scolding the cook, rating the black waiting-girls, and declaring that she would have to do everything herself to get it properly done. While waiting for dinner I had a rather amusing conversation with a Boer, who had dropped in on a visit to Mr. Innis. This personage, who spoke English fluently, in-

formed me that he was the possessor of large farms in Natal, the Transvaal, and the Orange Free State. While residing on the former he considered himself a subject of the Queen of England, and as such felt loyal to her Majesty ; "but," added he, "on my Transvaal farm I at once become what you would call a rebel, for in that country I do not acknowledge the Queen's authority, and should have no hesitation in fighting against the English troops." For the Orange Free State he confessed to feeling a preference, and proceeded to enlarge on the might and power of that country. London, he assured me, he felt was nothing, when compared to Bloemfontein ; and as for the wonders of the eighty-one ton gun, why, at Bloemfontein there were many to be found of a much larger size ! Much laughter was provoked by this assertion, which greatly irritated him, whereupon he proceeded to give us a sketch of the difficulty which England would find in coping with the united forces of the Transvaal and the Orange Free State, ending in a long tirade of abuse of the English nation. Seeing the man was becoming excited, we left him explaining to an empty room how "the Boers could smash the English with their little fingers ;" and the remainder of this interesting information

was therefore lost upon us. When, half an hour later, we returned to the room for dinner he had departed, doubtless in exceeding disgust at our want of appreciation of the wonders of Bloemfontein, and the might and power of the Orange Free State.

A ride of twenty-four miles on the following morning brought us to Ladysmith, where we put up at our old quarters at the Crown Hotel. We had hardly arrived an hour before numerous invitations to lunch and dine, from several of the regiments quartered in the neighbourhood, were received; and I was much pleased by the kindly welcome and hospitality which were shown us on all sides. That afternoon we went up to the camp of the 14th Hussars, where luncheon was served in a large double marquee, which felt deliciously cool after the outside burning sun and atmosphere through which we had come. I was very anxious to go through the horses, there being some beautiful Arabs and Persians to be seen; but the inspection was delayed until we should return from Kimberley, on account of the absence of several which would have made the show incomplete. As we had brought no servant with us, Major (now Colonel) Knox, commanding the regiment, kindly promised to send an orderly

on to the Rising Sun early next day, in order to bring back our horses, it being our intention to ride thus far before joining the post-cart, in which we had taken seats for Harrismith. He further promised to take charge of our horses until our return, thus setting our minds at rest on that score.

Taking it easy, we arrived on the following afternoon at the Rising Sun, where very fair accommodation was obtained. Here we learnt that there was small probability of the post-cart passing that day, but that very early next morning it might be looked for. The departure of the orderly, leading our three horses, was an amusing sight, which gave us a good hour's occupation, the road along which he was proceeding being in full view from the inn for over three miles. Mounted on his own horse, he vainly endeavoured to induce the three ponies to follow him: They one and all evinced the greatest reluctance; and the spectacle presented by their three heads obstinately thrown back, and their noses extended outwards as they wended their slow march along, was ludicrous in the extreme. After an hour, they were still in sight, and I must confess we did not envy the unfortunate fellow his homeward ride. The moment the sun went down, it came

on to freeze hard, and there being no moon, the night was very dark. As I was standing at the door of the inn, after supper, trying to obtain a little fresh air, for the interior was somewhat stuffy and redolent with Boer tobacco, a spider, drawn by two horses, pulled up in front of me, and a fat puffing Boer descended, having previously committed the care of the reins to a confused, shivering heap of something, which at first I could not distinguish. The voice of the visitor was then heard calling loudly for brandy, which was followed by an explanation that it was taken to warm himself. He had fat on him, however, enough and to spare to protect himself from cold, and I am afraid the excuse was not believed by any one, though, for all anybody cared, he was welcome to drink twenty tots, as he called them, so long as he did not make himself obnoxious afterwards.

While he was indulging in his potations I advanced close up to the spider for the purpose of making an inspection of the shivering heap that held the reins. Examination proved it to be a poor, half-naked Hottentot or Bushman, who, cowering in a ragged blanket, was endeavouring to get warm. "Here is a subject to whom a glass of brandy would do some benefit," I called out.

to the landlord inside, and upon his making his appearance I requested him to bring forth a good strong tot. The Boer at this juncture made his appearance, rather drunk, and decidedly an unpleasant neighbour. Mounting his spider, he was proceeding to take his departure, when, springing to the horses' heads, I restrained them. "What is de matter?" he called out. "What do you stop zee horses for?"

"Nothing," I answered, "except to give that poor, shivering slave of yours a drink, and you are not going on until he has had one, either."

"What! you give zee dog a drink?" questioned my drunken friend, full of astonishment.

"Dog?" I replied. "I don't know what you call dog; if he is one, all I can say is that he is a much nicer creature than you are."

"But I am in zee hurry," continued the Boer, with a drunken hiccup, "and I want to get on," he added, touching up his horses.

The animals sprang forward, but I managed to restrain them; and my husband coming to my assistance, they were effectually stopped. By this time the landlord made his appearance, and, taking the glass from his hands, I told him to run quickly for a pipe, a box of matches, and some tobacco. I then proceeded to give the Hottentot

his drink ; but for a long time he could not be made to understand that it was for him. When, however, this dawned upon him, his face of astonishment, wonder, and gratitude was worth seeing. His eyes filled with tears as he took the glass with his poor, trembling hands, and in broken English I heard him thank me, though in a low voice :

“ Good lady—kind missus,” he said, “ English lady you are—English very kind, not like the Boer.”

I next proceeded to make him happy with the pipe, box of matches, and tobacco I had sent for ; and presenting him in addition with a warm blanket, I then told my drunken friend that he was at liberty to proceed. The potations, however, were taking effect, his head had sunk on his chest, and the reins were dropping from his hands. Having called the Hottentot's attention to his master's state, the man took the reins, and thanking the “ kind missus ” once more, proceeded to act the part of Jehu. The spider was speedily lost to sight in the darkness, and, somewhat cold and very sleepy, I retired to my room and couch in anticipation of an early rise next morning. An early rise it proved to be too, and almost ere morning had begun to dawn, I was startled in my

sleep by the winding blast of a bugle, which I knew to herald the approach of the post-cart. Hastily dressing, we heard its wheels rumbling and grinding over the gravel stones in front of the inn, while another loud and prolonged blast, ending in a merry tune, announced that the vehicle had pulled up. We were quickly in the public room, fearful of being left behind, and here we found Mr. Welch, the driver, and several passengers seated at the table negotiating coffee. Proceeding to follow their example, we entered into conversation with the former, who proved to be a little man so enveloped in a closely-drawn cap and high fur-collar, that nothing but two little beady, black eyes could be distinguished twinkling from beneath their numerous wrappings. He informed us that the two front seats on either side of him were reserved for our use, the accommodation at the back of the cart being taken up by four young ladies who were on their way to Harrismith. Bolting his hot coffee in a manner which made me wonder if he was half a salamander, he next began to fidget, then consulted his watch, and finally declared, in a gruff voice, that it was quite time to think of starting. To this we agreed readily enough, and our saddle-bags having been placed in safety at the bottom of

the cart, we proceeded at once to take our places. They were certainly the strangest and most uncomfortable seats imaginable, in which the occupiers were obliged to sit bolt upright, no space for ease or comfort being allowed, and very little sitting room forthcoming either. I could not but compare our positions to that of two statues stuck into a niche in a wall, stiff and motionless, and very uncomfortable both in reality and in appearance.

I say stiff and motionless ; but this we did not long remain. The cart could boast of few springs, and the pace at which the six horses that drew it were sent along was not conducive to the easy run or motions of the vehicle. The joltings and bumpings were terrific, and we had not proceeded half a mile before I felt certain that both my arms would present that night a sorry spectacle of blows and bruises innumerable. "If this is to go on," quoth I, "what shall we be like at the end of four hundred miles, after three days' and four nights' continuous banging and jolting?" The prospect was neither a pleasant nor encouraging one, and I allowed it to slide from my thoughts, or rather endeavoured to banish it from my mind as often as it presented itself. On one thing I felt there was matter for congratulation, and that

was the experienced driving of our whip. He certainly was a first-rate coachman, and the six horses were handled by him with the greatest dexterity. They were a wild, well-bred, pulling chestnut team, and gave him no little trouble; but they were real beauties to go, and took us along at a tremendous pace. About ten miles on the road we pulled up at a pretty little wayside inn, where the chestnut team were allowed to go free, and replaced by six bays. Behind these the pace in nowise decreased, neither did the bumpings or joltings, which seemed on the contrary to grow worse and worse as we proceeded. Though I essayed conversation at first, I soon relinquished the attempt as a bad job, turning my attention to the preservation of my arms, which were beginning to feel painful and tender under the rough treatment they were receiving.

This second stage having been accomplished as quickly as the last, a halt of half an hour was called for breakfast opposite a small hotel, where another relay of horses was found awaiting the cart. The place was kept by a Swede and his two pretty daughters, and the cleanliness and air of comfort which surrounded it on all sides was exceedingly pleasant and welcome to us dust-stained travellers. In a small, cool sitting-room,

breakfast was served, consisting of bacon and eggs done to perfection, two roast chickens, tea, coffee, buttered toast, and some delicious bread and butter. For this sumptuous repast the sum charged was very moderate, two shillings a head being all that was demanded.

Punctual to the minute, Mr. Welch was heard playing a warning tune on the horn outside, which signified that time was up. Out we all bustled, hastening to take our seats, for which operation the impatient little man would give us but scant law. With an elaborate and successful catch of his whip and workmanlike salute, he had put his horses into motion, and before one exactly knew whether one was on or off the cart, the lumbering vehicle was once more flying over the ground.

On nearing the Drakensberg range, we began to enter upon some grand scenery. The country all round became a succession of rocky heights, and the glimpses which I was able here and there to obtain into the valleys below afforded scenes of extreme beauty. The great range itself towered high above us; and Mr. Welch, in reply to my query as to how we were going to penetrate to the other side of this impenetrable barrier, pointed to a winding pass, high up on the Berg,

which he informed me went by the name of "De Beer's," and was the only means of passage from this side of the Drakensberg to the other. At the base of the mountains, and before beginning the ascent, we halted for a third time opposite an inn of evil appearance, bearing the name of "The Good Hope" Hotel. Here eight strong oxen replaced the team of horses, who were taken out of the cart and led on ahead to the summit by two Kaffirs.

The first portion of the ascent proved very steep and severe, the road, which was the work of recent engineering skill, winding round a perpendicular cliff, which overlooked on the other side a sheer precipice. A few disjointed masses of rock formed the only wall or barricade to provide against the danger of any ascending cart or vehicle slipping backwards and falling over the precipice. It appeared to me a very unsafe position, as, from my seat in the cart, I looked down many hundreds of feet below, and felt that on the powers of a few oxen our lives apparently depended. The strain on the yoke was indeed so great, that at every moment we would come to a stop; then the cart would begin to retrocede towards the yawning gulf, only to be arrested in its course by stones hastily.

pushed behind the wheels by the driver of the oxen.

After a bit we got on to safer ground, when any little excitement attendant on the first portion of the ascent came to an end, and we found the occupation of sitting behind the crawling oxen monotonous to a degree. My suggestion to descend and climb the pass on foot was, however, not received with favour by the other occupants of the cart, the extreme heat of a midday sun being regarded as a strong deterrent to any exertion. I was therefore forced to follow my own suggestion alone, and quitting the cart pushed on ahead of my companions, whom I soon left far in the rear. The roadway proving rough and dusty, I left it, and, striking into a mountain path which appeared to lead upwards in the required direction, I quickly succeeded after some difficult scaling in reaching a commanding ridge or ledge of rock, from which I hoped to obtain a good view of the country around. In this hope I was not disappointed. From my eyrie perch a magnificent scene lay stretched at my feet; far away below was "Fair Natal," and to the west the grand, gaunt heights of Basutoland flashed sternly and defiantly in the distance—a portion of the Maluti Mountains

being just distinguishable through the golden haze that trembled on all around. The ranges of the Roode and Witte Bergen in the Orange Free State were distinctly visible, while along the eastern portion of the Drakensberg arose a succession of crags of the strangest shape and appearance, which lost none of their wonder or artistic formation under the many changing influences of the dazzling mirage.

The ledge to which I had gained access was a portion of a high toppling crag, which stands out conspicuously visible on the eastern summit of the De Beer Pass, coming from Natal. On its surface grass of the softest, flowers of the sweetest, formed a luxuriant carpet, over which the boughs of mountain ash trees cast their welcome and delightful shade; and on this luxurious couch of nature I was able to lie down and rest myself while awaiting the cart, which I could see far away below me—a mere speck in the distance.

It was a spot of extreme loveliness, which I am not going to attempt to destroy by description; it was a scene that it was well worth travelling many miles to behold. One of its greatest charms was its perfect solitude, its complete isolation from the vicinity of civilisation, from which its protective height will long separate it. The

mountains of the Drakensberg must ever form a barrier which all the skill of man would fail in levelling: with their existence is linked that of the snug little nook—that glimpse of Paradise which it was my good fortune to wander across that day.

It took the post-cart two hours to reach the summit of the pass, and the horses were reharnessed at a little inn close by. Then away we went again as quickly as ever, and before long had crossed the spruit which marks the boundary between Natal and the Orange Free State. Down one steep hill the foremost horses took fright at something or other, and, communicating their alarm to the others, they one and all proceeded to bolt. After a few fruitless efforts to pull them up, Mr. Welch directed his attention to keeping them, if possible, on the road, and a nasty turn in the distance seemed to awaken apprehensions in his mind that a spill was imminent. Counselling us to hold fast—which was, however, easier said than done—he set himself to work to direct the course of his runaway vehicle. Clinging on with all our might, we awaited the catastrophe, which we felt must surely come. To add to the confusion, the four young ladies at the back of the cart began to scream, and the

chorus much resembled that of a lot of hungry pigs. For the life of me I could not keep from laughing, and very heartily I did so, which in a manner had the effect of alleviating their fears. Before long a steep ascent came to our rescue, and did for us what all the power of man could not manage—*i.e.* brought the runaways to their senses.

After this we went quietly enough; and with two or three more stoppages to change horses, in the gloom of the evening, Harrismith, nestling beneath the shadow of some strange isolated crags, hove in sight; and we entered the town in grand style, pulling up in front of the hotel amidst the flourish of a brass band, which struck up at our approach, and the cheers of an assembled crowd of people. Here we were informed that another post-cart, running in connection with that of Mr. Welch, would start punctually at twelve o'clock that night, and that as it contained only three seats we had better secure them as quickly as possible, if we wished to continue our journey without delay. This we at once hastened to do; and having settled with Mr. Welch and secured our saddlebags, we entered the hotel, where we obtained comfortable accommodation and a fair dinner. This disposed of, we gladly availed

ourselves of the few spare hours before us to lie down and get some sleep ; but my rest was a good deal broken and disturbed by the discordant sounds of the brass band which had greeted us on our arrival. Harrismith not boasting of very extended surroundings, the area in which the brass band revolved was ever in the closest proximity to the hotel. The selection of tunes, if by such an appellation the ghastly sounds emitted can be termed, was also not of the most numerous ; and before long I became acquainted with the entire programme, which was repeated again and again with unflagging energy. How I envied my husband the stolid indifference with which he slumbered on through it all, and even hailed as a relief the bugle blast, which, punctually as it struck twelve, was heard resounding outside, announcing the arrival of the post-cart.

CHAPTER XIX.

ONWARD ONCE MORE—AN AWKWARD POSITION—PREPARATIONS
FOR DEFENCE—AMIDST REPUBLICANS—DISCOMFORT AND
REMONSTRANCE—ESCAPING A WETTING—ON THE VERGE OF
DESTRUCTION—GIVING DIRK THE SLIP—THE WORLD IS VERY
SMALL—A RACE FOR THE POST-CART—A WARM WELCOME.

AN open, rickety-looking two-wheeled cart, to which were harnessed four white horses, a muffled figure holding the reins, and the snow falling thickly around, was the scene that presented itself to our horrified gaze as we came forth from the warm, cosy hotel into the bleak night air. Oh! how uninviting those two snow-embedded seats at the back of the post-cart looked, and how desolate and dreary was the prospect of a midnight drive under such circumstances. Little dreaming what a journey was before us, we had, on leaving Ladysmith, provided ourselves with neither rugs nor greatcoats, and our sufferings in consequence promised to be the reverse of trifling. Everybody in the hotel was buried in slumber, and the

sleepy boots who superintended our departure was in no position to supply us with anything suitable to protect us from the inclemency of the weather. Scrambling with difficulty into the back seats, from which we ruefully brushed the fast-melting snowflakes that covered them, we proceeded to take counsel as to how we should manage to retain them while the vehicle was in motion. Never before have I come across so badly balanced a trap. Our combined weights served to topple it backwards in the most alarming manner, which neither the weight of the driver nor that of another passenger seated beside him, with our saddle-bags and the mail-bags all piled in front, could avail in any way to counterbalance. The driver, whose husky voice impressed us with the idea that he was a very old man, endeavoured to console us with the information that it was all right, the cart was constructed to balance in such a manner; and in the same breath giving vent to a peculiar cry, he set his horses in motion, and without troubling to look behind him to see whether we were lying in the road or not, which would most assuredly have been our fate had we not clung on to the back rail of our seat with all our might and main, he dashed away at full gallop, whirled round a corner

or two, and after several of the closest shaves which it has ever been my lot to experience (and they have been many), fairly settled down into a good racing gallop over the darkest and roughest road imaginable.

All night long we continued this species of travelling. The snow ceased to fall, but it came on to freeze with great severity, and a cutting wind froze the very marrow in our bones. It is with unpleasant memories arising that I look back on that horrible night drive, and detail our experiences with a kind of grim satisfaction that it is really a thing of the past. Even the rising sun brought with it at first scant consolation; we had sunk into that congealed, inanimate, torpid state, which seemed to defy the power of the most scorching rays to dissipate. In this, however, we were mistaken, for no sooner had the sun acquired sufficient height than the icy feeling in the atmosphere vanished, the chill blast changed to a soft warm wind, and we began ere long to feel the heat stealing once more into our petrified and frozen bodies.

Our course varied only by stoppages to change horses and obtain exceedingly hasty meals, we continued to jolt and bang along in the same old rickety vehicle all day. We were due to arrive

about five o'clock at a place called Bethlehem, from which another post-cart was timed to start at eight o'clock that night, in which we had determined to prosecute another ninety miles of our journey from Bethlehem to a place called Winburg. But ere reaching Bethlehem our driver halted, and diving into a secret recess of the box-seat he produced two pairs of loaded pistols, which he proceeded to distribute amongst us, with strict injunctions to keep a sharp look-out as we went along. On inquiring the reason of these ominous-looking preparations for an attack, he informed us that the district through which we were about to pass was infested by deserters and cut-throats, who would make small bones about attacking and rifling Her Majesty's mail, and murdering its occupants. This was cheerful news certainly ; but, if not exactly pleasant, it served in a manner to awaken us from the weary feeling of lassitude into which fifteen hours' jolting in this miserable conveyance had reduced us. I found myself even enjoying a pleasurable excitement, which every dark shadow or curiously shaped rock served to heighten and enhance. Over and over again I was on the point of giving a false alarm, and mechanically on several occasions I felt my hand tightening on the pistol I held, .

as some Kaffir or wayside traveller hove in sight.

But though we watched and kept a sharp look-out, neither brigand nor murderous villain hove in sight. Perhaps we were saved from an attack that day by the fact that murder and robbery had already been committed, several hours previous to our arrival in this district, on the person of a young man who had left Bethlehem that morning for the purpose of joining some waggons of his which were outspanned not far from the town. As we approached the outskirts, we came upon a riderless horse, who, with one girth missing, a loose saddle, and a back sore and tender, was making the best of his way back to the stable from which, a few short hours previously, he had issued with his burden safe and well. Inquiry served to prove that before starting, the owner had bragged in a public house of being the possessor of ready cash, which he carried about his person, to the amount of £200. A blanket which had been strapped in front of his saddle was missing, as well as the girth, and the conjecture arrived at, after some investigation of the affair by the authorities, was, that he had been secretly surprised and made away with, and that his body, rolled in the missing blanket, had been in all

probability effectually secured, safe from the most minute and careful search. The greatest apathy and indifference was, however, manifested in the affair, which gave proof sufficient that such occurrences were not infrequent; and we could not but congratulate ourselves on our safe journey through a district rendered unpleasant from the deeds of murder and violence that had therein taken place from time to time.

It was with a fervent *Deo gratia* that we descended from our uncomfortable positions at the back of the post-cart. In the hotel we were regaled with a meat-tea, which was largely attended by the influential members of the town of Bethlehem, whose conversation in many varied forms both amused and interested me. This half-English, half-Boer community of colonists, with their republican free-and-easy manners, was new to me in every sense of the word. The freedom between master and servant was also extremely evident, and it seemed strange to be seated at table with people whom in England we should relegate to the servants' hall. In this country every white man goes by the name of Mister; they are an independent lot, and regard each other with views of perfect equality. But all this time the fresh post-cart, which was to carry.

us on another night's journey of ninety miles, was awaiting us just outside the hotel. Hurrying through our meat-tea, we followed the proprietor, who led the way, assuring us as he went that the driver to whom we were about to be entrusted was the finest of his profession on that road, and that he felt sure we should make a comfortable journey in the best of post-carts. This was cheering enough, though I am bound to say that when at last I came in sight of both driver and post-cart my heart somewhat sank, and the sanguine hopes raised by the assurances of the proprietor died away very quickly. A rough-looking vehicle, in which was seated a repulsively hideous Hottentot holding the reins, gave us a very good idea of the kind of journey before us that night; yet, though we were fully prepared for one of weariness and discomfort, we little foresaw the many stirring events which would occur on that memorable night's drive.

Having been penned into the centre of the cart, much after the manner in which farmers carry their sheep to market, the signal to start was given to *Dirk*, for so our driver was called. Like an arrow from a bow he had set the horses in motion, and, whirling round a corner, dashed off at so furious a pace that the cart swayed from

one side of the road to the other in the most violent manner. Down a steep hill helter-skelter we went, narrowly missing an overturn into a deep gully which ran parallel with the road, and all but overturning a passing cart, the inmates of which stared at us in astonishment and amazement. "What are you doing, Dirk?" I inquired, "for goodness sake, pull up and go slower; we shall be shaken to death, or else you will end by breaking our necks."

"No, no, missis," answered the man in very broken English; "me get over bad road before darkness comes on."

As he in no way offered to abate the pace, we were forced to accept this explanation as a satisfactory reply; but the misery we endured for the next hour or so quite beggars description. The night had become so dark that we could not distinguish the leading horses, and having for some time left the main road, we were now travelling over a narrow sandy track, which Dirk seemed to experience some difficulty in sticking to. At last we pulled up at a wayside house, where, he informed us, he intended to outspan for an hour or two to rest the horses, the next relay being yet some distance off. In this house we sought shelter, and found it tenanted by a woman

stretched on a sofa, and a young boy and girl seated near the fireside. They made no effort to rise, and evinced no sign of welcome as we entered, the woman merely rolling about and groaning in the most distressing manner. Thinking that perhaps we were *de trop*, we turned to go outside again, when the woman suddenly called to us and told us to sit down. Hoping she would offer us some coffee, we did so ; but not a bit of it, and for the next hour or so she raved and talked away about deeds she had done, how she had shot Zulus down during the Zulu War, and Kaffirs down during the Kaffir War, and how she would do it again if she only got the chance. Then she began to cry, and to complain of fearful pains in the head, which last statement made me fairly believe that we had got into the abode of a raving maniac. Under the pretence of looking for Dirk, we slipped outside, but not before the woman had begun to scream at the top of her voice, and to declare that I was going to murder her. To speak the honest truth, I really felt very uncomfortable and hardly safe, even when the door was well closed behind me. Dirk, too, could be found nowhere, and it was only after a long and vexatious search that he was at length discovered fast asleep on a cinder heap just outside the bar.

Shaking him roughly, my husband ordered him to get the horses harnessed at once, an order with which he seemed most unwilling to comply ; and it was not before another good hour had been wasted that we got fairly under weigh again. By this time the moon had risen, and threw more light on the road we were pursuing, but Dirk's driving continued as erratic as ever, and we ran several exceedingly narrow risks. About ten miles further on we halted to change horses, after having spent over half-an-hour in knocking up two sleepy Kaffirs, who were discovered in a large barn buried in some bundles of oat hay. From a kennel hard by a savage dog came rushing out as though he intended there and then to make a meal of me ; but with the instinct natural to his race, he quickly was able to distinguish between a friend and a foe, and we were soon on the best of terms. As soon as the fresh team was put to, we continued our journey, Dirk doing his best to upset us into a deep spruit ; as it was, our saddlebags and both our dogs were bumped out into the stream, and had to be fished out wringing wet.

Gradually the road became more desolate and lonely ; vast tracks of seemingly desert land stretched away on either side of us ; gaunt crags rose from out the plains ; and the moaning night-

wind whistled through the flapping cover of the post-cart. Suddenly Dirk pulled up, and in a mysterious voice asked me if either myself or the master possessed a watch and money? "Of course not," I answered, "at any rate, not for you;" and apprehending foul play, we set ourselves to watch the man closely. Before long I became aware that we had left the road and were driving rapidly over the Veldt. Twice I spoke to Dirk, calling his attention to the fact, but he never answered until, suddenly coming to a full stop, he informed us that he intended to outspan. This information was accompanied by a long, low whistle, which was answered by another whistle not far off, and presently I heard voices close by. Ere Dirk was well aware of my intention, I had snatched the reins from his hands, and, putting the horses into a gallop, guided them in the direction in which I thought the road would lie. Fortunately my bump of locality served me in good stead, and we soon regained it; but it was not until we had put several miles between ourselves and the voices on the Veldt that I consented to restore Dirk the reins.

So on we went, and my eyes began to grow heavy; sleep very nearly took possession of me; and had it done so, I verily believe I should

not now have been here to tell this tale. A sudden jolt made me spring to my feet and hastily look ahead for any fresh danger. Not a moment too soon. What I saw made me once more seize the reins, while with a tremendous effort I managed to pull the horses up just as they were about to trot headlong into a yawning cleft in the Veldt, quite twenty feet down. In another second we should have been a struggling, or, I should rather imagine, an inanimate heap; as it was, the shock was almost as startling as the reality. My husband, being short-sighted, had not perceived the danger into which Dirk was hurrying us, and to the sudden jolt, which so thoroughly banished sleep from my eyes, must be ascribed our narrow escape. I don't think Dirk realised in the slightest degree the danger into which he had unwittingly led us, for he angrily inquired why I had taken the reins and was always interfering with his driving. My only reply was to point to the chasm yawning in front of the horses, accompanied by an order to get down at once and assist us in backing them away from their perilous position. This he sulkily proceeded to do, and after some difficulty we managed to get the horses, who were unaccustomed to the work, to back the cart a considerable distance. As soon as we regained

the road I restored the reins to Dirk, who, to my surprise, though it was down hill, started the horses into a gallop, and then let go all the reins, which at once fell amongst the feet of the wheelers, and left the animals unrestrained to their own headlong career. Before I had time to jump up and endeavour to regain them, up went Dirk's legs in the air as he tumbled backwards in my lap. As my readers may imagine, he was very quickly ejected from this position, while I hastened to scramble over the front seat and then across the splash-board on to the pole of the carriage. In this manner, I fortunately succeeded in getting hold of the reins, which, as good luck would have it, were trailing behind and had not got entangled in the wheelers' feet. Putting the brake hard down, my husband came to my assistance, when, uniting our strength, we succeeded in getting the horses to adopt a more moderate pace. After this, while he managed the brake and kept an eye on Dirk, I took charge of the six horses and acted Jehu ; but the road was a complicated one, and our late driver, whom we began to suspect of being very drunk, would not assist us with much information. About five o'clock in the morning a place called Senekal was reached, where the weary horses stopped of their own accord at a wayside house,

thus dumbly informing me that here I must obtain relays. Their information proved correct, for having knocked the sleepy occupants up, fresh horses were brought out and harnessed there and then. During the operation, Dirk took the opportunity to slip indoors, and when we wished to proceed, we found him so hopelessly buried in a drunken sleep, that nothing we could do would awaken him. Another half-hour was therefore spent in searching for a guide, and at last, after some difficulty, we obtained the services of a Boer, who, for a consideration of £2, consented to accompany us as far as Winburg—distant forty miles—and which the post-cart was timed to reach at eleven o'clock that morning. Leaving Dirk to his drunken slumbers, and chuckling to ourselves over the dismay and fright he would experience on coming to his senses and finding his cart and horses gone; we started off once more. Twenty miles on the road, we obtained our last relay, and an hour before the appointed time the inhabitants of Winburg were surprised by the arrival of Her Majesty's mail-cart, which, driven by a lady, might have been seen entering the town! Our first care was to deliver the mails at the Post Office, our next to discover the owner of the post-cart and horses; and both these matters

having been satisfactorily accomplished, we repaired to the hotel, there to await the departure of another post-cart, in which we wearily felt we would have to spend the remainder of that day and the whole of the following night ere arriving at Bloemfontein, the capital of the Orange Free State.

We had not to wait long before round it came to the front door of the hotel, at which, for the honour of having a cup of coffee and some slight refreshment therein, we were in the act of paying the landlord a remuneration of £2! The man was a Yankee, and it struck me that I had seen his face before. He talked a good deal about London and the friends he had made therein, asking me if I was acquainted with the Marquis of Queensberry, a great friend of his! I did not gratify him with the information that he was at that moment conversing with a sister of his great friend; for, the moment he made this remark, I recalled his face as that of an American whom in childhood I had once seen at my brother's house in town, and recognised in my friend a gentleman who had taken in several people at that time, and having obtained small sums of money from them on loan had then disappeared and never been heard of since. After years, I had thus chanced upon him, one whom I never expected to see

again ; and, as the charge of £2 for slight refreshment will prove, still apparently engaged at his old game of making money ! Truly the world is very small.

We found one fellow-passenger in the cart also bound for the Diamond Fields, whose companionship we had during the rest of our journey. All that day and throughout the night we continued our jolting career. Our driver, a very ugly Hottentot, was nevertheless a good whip, and we were troubled with none of the scenes of the past night. Frequently we recalled Dirk to our minds, and wondered whether he had yet recovered from his inebriated condition.

In the dawn of early morning Bloemfontein was reached, after three days and three nights of almost incessant travelling, and another day and night still in prospect. Since leaving Ladysmith, I had not known what sleep was, and began to wonder whether I should ever know what it was again. We were informed on entering the hotel that the next post-cart would not leave Bloemfontein until mid-day, which gave us a good opportunity to indulge in a hot bath each, which was very soothing to our aching bones. Then, in the public-room to which we repaired, we found breakfast going on ; and as we had touched nothing

solid since leaving Bethlehem, we were not sorry to join in with many others assembled. At eleven o'clock we sauntered out to look for President Brand's house, which after some search was discovered, and Mrs. Brand duly visited. The good lady entertained us with a lengthened exposition of her views on Englishmen and Boers in general, which I need hardly say preponderated much in favour of the latter. The room in which she received us was much darkened and felt deliciously cool, so that it was positively painful to issue into the outside glare once more. When we did so, it was to go in search of the Volksraad, the House of Parliament of the Orange Free State, which Mrs. Brand assured me was well worth seeing. As it was by far the largest building in the place, we found it without difficulty, one of the officials connected therewith showing us through with all the airs of a grand monsieur. I must confess I did not feel very much impressed with either Bloemfontein or its Volksraad. The glowing description of its might and wonders given by the Boer farmer at Sunday River proved to be, as I imagined at the time, a terrible stretch of imagination. Though the town was pretty, it was a very ordinary sized one; and as for the Volksraad, it much resembled a town hall.

As we were listening somewhat impatiently to the prosy information vouchsafed us by our guide, the distant blast of a bugle and a low, rumbling sound made us stand at attention, and hastily consult our watches. The hands pointed to twelve o'clock, the hour at which the post-cart was due to start.

"Good gracious, we shall miss it!" exclaimed my husband; upon which we both set off running as hard as we could, leaving the prosy official and his explanation unfinished, staring after us with mouth wide open with astonishment. As we issued from the large folding gates, there, true enough, was the post-cart coming down the street at a merry pace—another minute and it would have passed on into the open country, and we should have been left behind. Our frantic shouts and excited signals, however, attracted the attention of the driver, who at once pulled up. There was very little room left, but we managed to squeeze in somehow, and congratulated ourselves on having had the forethought to put our saddle-bags in the cart before starting on our round of visits.

Varied only by about ten or twelve stoppages to change horses, the rest of our journey contained much sameness. All that day the post-cart flew

along, and our fourth night's travelling was accomplished in safety. At six o'clock on the following morning, a place called Boshof was reached, where we were transferred into a kind of omnibus, which carried us over the remaining twenty miles to Kimberley, and about twelve o'clock that day we entered the long, straggling, dusty, dirty town, which took us over half-an-hour to drive through.

Here we found some difficulty in getting accommodation of any kind or sort. Every hotel was crammed, and the prospect of sleeping in the streets began to assume an aspect of probability; but just as we were giving up the search in despair, our friend of the post-cart arrived and took us to a place of refuge in the shape of a third-rate hotel, where, however, we obtained very fair accommodation, or at least thought it fair in our delight at getting in anywhere.

News travels fast, and although we had given assumed names to the landlord, the truth eked out before long. Ere we had been two hours in Kimberley, most of the dignitaries of the town had left their cards, and much hospitality was shown us in the numerous invitations to dinner which we received. One gentleman in particular, Dr. Mathews, a member of the Legislative Assembly

at the Cape, and a gentleman much esteemed and looked up to in Kimberley, was especially solicitous to show us every attention and courtesy. The night of our arrival, he and Mrs. Mathews entertained us at dinner in their charming residence, when several guests were also invited to meet us. Our old, dusty, travel-stained garments were again shown, much at a disadvantage, against the evening clothes and dresses of the others, and we felt rather like two ruffians; but the warm welcome accorded us on all sides soon put us at our ease, and we spent our first evening at Kimberley in a very pleasant manner, rendered doubly delightful after the hardships of the past few days.

CHAPTER XX.

KIMBERLEY—THE MINES OF FORMER DAYS—A GOVERNMENT REFUGE—GOVERNMENT PROVISIONS—DIAMOND WASHING AND SORTING—"COMING EVENTS CAST THEIR SHADOWS BEFORE"—AWAKING SLUMBERS—OFF THE ROAD—AN UNCOMMUNICATIVE BOER—LIFE'S LAST STRUGGLE—PROLONGED GREETINGS—THE GREAT GOD SLEEP—AN ORIGINAL PONY—OVERTURNED—DRUNKEN RHAPSODY.

FIFTEEN years ago the spot whereon Kimberley now stands was a vast stretching Veldt, on which few farmsteads or habitations of any kind existed. But in 1857 the children of a Dutch farmer called Jacobs discovered a stone, which for some time they used as a plaything; until a passing traveller, observing it one day, and remarking that it was peculiar-looking as well as somewhat heavy, offered to purchase it from the farmer's wife. She scouted the idea of selling a stone as ridiculous, but gave it to him, and the pebble soon after this changed hands. When eventually it reached those of a Dr. Atherstone of Grahamstown, he set all doubt at rest as to its

value with the information that it was a diamond ; and this stone, weighing twenty-one and three-sixteenth carats, was sold for £500.

After this a search was instituted, and, fresh finds taking place from time to time, there was soon a rush on the country around. Companies were formed, claims bought up, and the marvellous change, which in a few years turned a desert into a large and populous town, took place. But what they once were, Kimberley Diamond Fields are now no longer. In the days of their infancy, the wondrous sight of thousands and thousands of claims being each separately worked by their owners might have been seen. Like one vast spider's web, ropes extended from the mouth of the pit all round in countless thousands, threading the seemingly inextricable maze to the depth of the pit below. A confusing vision of buckets ascending and descending in their busy work of carrying aloft the hitherto hidden gem, disembowelled from the very jaws of the earth, and of assisting in the great work of excavation, flashed before the onlooker's eye. In that pit below, the working forms of the swarthy sons of Africa might be distinguished in dense masses ; and they, fashioning out the pit which was to bring gain to the white man, forgot not the future for which

they lent their toil—slaving that the white man might become enriched; they too could look ahead and dream of an El Dorado—for was not the money gained by such toil to be quickly converted into arms and ammunition, to store up for future use, wherewith, when the time should come, to wrest back from the ever-closing grasp of civilisation their own fair land!

But those times have come and gone; hopes have been raised and lost, and a great change has fallen upon Kimberley. At the present moment it is a vast straggling town, but many of the buildings are merely temporary constructions. Their owners look forward to the days when diamonds shall cease to be found in the vast pits, from which the present prosperity of the town is obtained; and when those days arrive, the fall of Kimberley will be even quicker than its rise.

At dinner, on the night of our arrival, it had been arranged that Dr. Mathews should accompany us on the following day to all the sights most worth seeing in the town. The Doctor was furthermore good enough to place his carriage at our disposal; and on the morning in question, and at the appointed hour, he arrived, driving it himself. Our first impressions of Kimberley were made in a whirlwind of dust, which continued to

blow about in large clouds the whole of that day ; so that these impressions were at the most unfavourable, at least as far as the weather was concerned. We commenced business by a visit to the hospital, where the richer portion of sick inhabitants of the town could, by paying for it, be accommodated with comfortable rooms, every manner of luxury, and good food. I must confess that its inmates did not interest me, and the culminating point was reached when I was thrust into a hot, stuffy room, where a woman lay sick with fever. The atmosphere was so horrible that I soon made a bolt for it, and glad was I to reach the open air. In sad contrast to this comfortable abode was the Government Hospital, which we next visited, and in which were huddled a great many white, as well as black, patients. Into the ward-room set aside for the former, the wind and rain both found their way, and the walls were damp and of unhealthy appearance. The room or 'outhouse set aside for the Kaffirs more resembled a barn, as indeed it was, than anything else ; and the miserable aspect of the poor sufferers therein was pitiable to behold. Many lay on mattresses on the ground, where the cold draughts swept over them night and day, and on which they were stretched out, helpless to move or assist them-

selves. One poor sightless Kaffir, who had lain on his bed of sickness and pain in this miserable hole for over two years, informed us that it was the dream of his life to return to Maritzburg, where his parents were living. On inquiring why the Government did not gratify this wish, I was informed that the several waggoners passing down-country who had been spoken to on the subject had demanded two or three pounds over the sum which the Government was disposed to grant; and that, in consequence, it was preferred to keep him on its hands, rather than expend these two or three extra pounds in gratifying the oft-repeated prayer of the sick and sightless man! I no longer regretted having paid a visit to this quarter, and having left the matter in Dr. Mathews' hands, I am convinced that by this time the poor man is at last made happy.

On another bed hard by a man lay dying. He had that morning undergone the amputation of both arms and legs, and now in this den of misery was eking out the last few hours of life. Poor wretch! his hot, dry lips were parched and cracked with thirst; but by his side there was no attendant to see to his wants, and soothe with care and tenderness his few remaining hours of existence. Other sights and scenes of suffering met

me wherever I turned ; but, sickened and disgusted at beholding what I could neither help nor remedy, I begged my companions to hasten their departure. Subsequent inquiry as to the manner in which this hospital was provided for by Government proved to me that the only attendants of the many sick I had seen were one old man and his wife, whose duties were too numerous to be properly fulfilled ; the entire charge of the hospital, care of its inmates, as well as all the cooking, cleaning, and other menial tasks, devolving entirely on their shoulders. What wonder then that this overworked pair could find no time to devote to the dying man, whose miserable condition I have just described ? That this description is exaggerated in any way is by no means the case ; rather have I failed to find adequate words to depict it in its real light ; but that such a condition of things is a disgrace to any responsible Government is a fact which it is impossible to lose sight of, and in which I am sure my readers will agree.

From the hospital, the horses' heads were turned in the direction of the Du Toits-Pan Pit, not far distant, where upon our arrival we were received by the manager of one of the companies working therein. This gentleman

conducted us about, explaining the whole system of working, and showing us many valuable and wonderful inventions in the way of machinery. Standing on the edge of the vast pit, in which hundreds of human forms, apparently not bigger than so many crows, were busily engaged in their endless work of excavating, while the buzz and boom of machinery at work fills the air, the mind becomes awed and wonderstruck at the sight of what the lust for gold and the power of man has been able in such a short time to accomplish. Up they come—those round iron barrels, in which the soil containing the precious stone reposes, —hundreds ever on the upward move; while, whirr! they descend as quickly as they rise, emptied of their load, to be filled afresh.

The soil, when brought to the summit, is carted away and strewn on the ground, where it is left for a fortnight or three weeks to pulverise in the sun. At the expiration of this time, gangs of Kaffirs, superintended by a white overseer, break the large, dry lumps into powder, and this in turn is carted away to be placed in the washing machine. It is during the process of first breaking that some of the largest diamonds are discovered, and the overseer has to keep a sharp look-out on the workers in consequence.

In spite of the terrible penalty incurred by any one detected in the act of secreting a good find, thefts are very rife, and many a diamond finds its way into Kaffir possession in spite of the sharpest vigilance. During the process of washing, the gravelly substance, which is full of garnets, as well as the diamonds, sinks to the bottom of the machine, while the earthen substance disappears in another channel. When it has been thoroughly washed through two or three times, this gravel is collected and strewn on tables, where searchers, with steel instruments somewhat resembling very broad knives, carefully turn it over and over in minute search. Then it is that the precious jewel is discovered in all manner of sizes and shapes, when it is placed in a small tray, on which another overseer keeps his watchful eye. I was given several little heaps of gravel to dissect, and in half-an-hour had succeeded in discovering about twenty or thirty diamonds, of very fair size, and some so perfectly shaped that they had every appearance of having just left the cutter's hands. It was certainly a very interesting sight, and thanks were particularly due to the courtesy of one of the partners, who, having arrived shortly after us at the pit, had taken us all over the different portions of the mine, thoroughly explain-

ing the nature and use of the machinery, in which I was especially interested. On leaving, I was presented with a handsome diamond, which I afterwards in the course of my further travels unfortunately lost ; or rather, I should imagine, it was stolen. There remained yet to be visited the other three great pits of Kimberley, respectively named "The Old De Beer," "Bulfontein," and the "Kimberley" mine itself, whose great gulf yawned in the very centre of the town. In due order each was visited ; but as all the pits are worked much in the same manner, each visit became a mere matter of repetition.

In the afternoon the governor of the gaol conducted us over the prison, in which every species of malefactor seemed to be gathered together. There were a great many in for diamond stealing and illicit diamond buying, men as well as women, some of whom were respectable people of the upper class in Kimberley. I came across two of Sekukuni's chiefs immured in this uninviting abode ; but I trust ere now that as their master has been restored to his rights, from which we so cruelly dragged him, so, too, have these unfortunate victims of a mistaken policy been allowed to return to their country. They were stately, dignified old men, and received us

superbly, as though they had been in their own kraals dispensing hospitality.

In another portion of the prison we saw a Kaffir who had been seized for killing his wife. As he had not been tried when we saw him, he was permitted to wander about in the company of a lot of other criminals, though chained hand and foot. On inquiring of the gaoler whether he would be condemned or not, the man replied in the affirmative, and proceeded to relate how formerly this murderer had been the hangman's assistant in that very gaol. On the occasion of the last execution which had taken place, he was still serving in this capacity, and brutally, at the last moment, jeered at the man on whom the final sentence of the law was about to be carried out. "You may mock, but you mock your own fate," answered the condemned, and even so his words had come to pass.

With the gaol the last sight of interest in Kimberley had been visited; and, with sight-seeing at an end, all desire to remain vanished. But the post-cart was not due to leave for several days, and herein lay the difficulty. How could we get down country without it? The brilliant idea of hiring a private carriage and four at length struck us, but the idea we found easier to con-

ceive than execute. No driver would be tempted, save at an exorbitant price, to undertake the journey; and the prices demanded were so much beyond all reason, that we did not feel justified in indulging the cupidity of these Kimberley sharks.

So we decided to await the post-cart, though most unwillingly, and had resigned ourselves to the inevitable, when one evening, as we were sitting by the window of our room, watching the passers-by, a cart drawn by four horses drew up with a flourish at the door, and a young man seated beside the driver descended. Soon after we heard him inquiring for us, and almost immediately he entered the room in which we were sitting. He turned out to be the owner of the cart in question, who had come to make a bargain and turn an honest penny. Ere long a contract was entered into and signed, and when the man left it was with the engagement to convey us down-country in his cart for the sum of £80.

We decided to start at daybreak on the following morning, and accordingly at the appointed hour our carriage arrived. It was drawn by four strong-looking horses, who seemed to treat their light duty with sovereign contempt, judging by the way in which they dashed up to the door. We were not long in taking our seats, and, our

saddlebags having been stowed away, the driver was told he might proceed. This he lost no time in doing, and in the gray, dull light of early morning we rattled through the silent streets of Kimberley, where all slumbered save we. Some, hearing the noise of the horses' feet and the rumble of the carriage-wheels, must have been startled in their sleep, and roused from their dreams of gold-making; for several times a blind was hastily pulled up as we passed, and the white, scared face of an awakened dreamer would be seen peering forth, clothed in his or her full *costume de nuit*.

We soon reached the outskirts of the town, and its dusty, dirty streets, and money-making, money-thinking population, were left behind. Kimberley, like all things human, faded from sight: to us it became but as a strange dream of the past, a portion of that ever-moving panorama which passes daily before one's eyes, and which, because of its strangeness, is stored up by memory, and, when other sights have passed away, is not forgotten.

Twenty miles on the road we stopped at a shady wayside inn for breakfast. Here we were joined by the proprietor of our carriage, who arrived very hot and dusty on an equally hot

and dusty pony, and leading a spare one besides. He informed us that, on second thoughts, he did not think the leaders we had come so far with would do the journey satisfactorily, and he had therefore brought these two strong ponies instead. We were a little mystified as to his real reasons for taking the two horses away, and not very much inclined to believe his statement. However, as the ponies looked fat and strong, we made no objection, and as soon as the animals had been fed and rested, we harnessed up and started again in the afternoon. After going about fifteen miles, one of the wheelers began to evince symptoms of weariness, and by the distressing way in which he sweated, we could at once see that something was wrong. The country through which we were passing was quite unknown to either ourselves or our driver; it was one of those short cuts, which invariably prove the longest, and which we had been induced to take by the landlord of the inn at which we had halted, who assured us that by following the post-cart line we should go at least a hundred miles out of our road. We had, in consequence, though not without misgivings, started on a short cut across country, which, had we known the way, would have been all very well, but as we did not, was,

I consider, a somewhat rash undertaking. It led to frequent deviations from the right route, which resulted in doubt and a good deal of argument, and, when these remedies failed, in a drive to some farmhouse, which, with the usual perversity of human things, was always exactly in the opposite direction to that which we were pursuing. Arrived at the farm, it was generally but vague information which we received, and the driver invariably seized the opportunity to have a chat with the people of the place. When we urged him to hurry on, he informed us that he was getting information as to the right road to pursue,—a statement which we did not think ourselves bound to believe. •

As soon as it was ascertained that the horse was really unfit to proceed, we decided to halt at the next farmhouse that showed itself; but in so deciding we counted without our host. The owner of the place, a surly-looking Boer, was furious at our outspanning on his territory, and, although he could see for himself the woeful condition of the poor beast, absolutely refused to allow us to remain. After a great deal of confabulation, he agreed to the space of one hour as the limit to our stay, adding that if we did not depart then he would send his men to turn us off.

On inquiring the distance to the next farm, he replied that it was ten miles. Ten! if he had said a hundred, we could not have felt more flabbergasted or disheartened, for the prospect of accomplishing such a distance with the sick animal appeared impossible. Poor beast! What would I not have given to have been able to get him into a warm stable, and on to a clean bed of straw; that warm stable and straw was temptingly near, and yet the brute who called himself a man stood calmly by and refused his help or pity.

One of the ponies having been substituted as wheeler, the sick horse was put in his place. How the next ten miles was accomplished, I never can quite make out. Once, but ~~once~~ only, the driver had used his whip, and brought it down with cruel severity across the suffering animal's back. My blood boiled up; the indignation I felt knew no bounds as I snatched it from his hand and broke it to pieces. I will not here repeat all I said to him; but my anger may find extenuating circumstances in the reader's thoughts, when he reflects on the cowardice of that lash on the poor beast, whose efforts were those of a dying animal struggling, with its honest, noble nature, to do its duty to the last.

The sun was setting, and the chills of evening

were beginning to make themselves felt, when, after the weariest journey I ever remember to have performed, a distant farmhouse hove in sight. On getting near it we found the farmer busily engaged in penning his sheep, assisted by boys of all ages, probably his sons, and several active Kaffirs, who appeared to occupy the position of sheep dogs. He did not seem to have much time to waste in talking, for, on inquiring if he would allow us to outspan at his farm for the night, he replied in a few muttered words, and by a wave of the hand towards the house. This we, however, took as permission, and accordingly at once made our way thither. At our approach, a crowd of yelling curs rushed forth, and their discordant din was galling in the extreme, partaking as it did of an inhospitable sound. They were followed to the door by several dirty-looking women, who, on being asked the same question, replied vaguely, then settled the matter by saying that we must await the master's return. This was impossible, the horse's state was growing more precarious every moment, and the only hope of saving his life was getting him into a stable without any further delay. At this juncture in the proceedings, a neat, clean-looking young girl came up. Her appearance was that of an Englishwoman, and

instinctively I addressed her in English. She at once replied in the old tongue, and, on hearing our story, requested us to follow her. Before long, and on turning a projecting crag, which had hitherto kept it out of sight, a neat-looking farmhouse suddenly gladdened our anxious gaze. Pointing towards it, the girl informed us that it was occupied by a Boer and his family, who would be sure to make us welcome ; and she then proceeded to show us where the stables stood. We begged her to go to the house and prepare the inmates for our arrival, while we made straight for the stables, in front of which the weary horses required no bidding to pull up. As we went towards the sick animal for the purpose of at once removing his harness, I noticed that the poor beast staggered as though he could hardly keep his feet ; and no sooner was he freed from the trap than his hind legs began to sink, and in another moment he would have fallen. Seeing this, I hastily urged him on ; but his walk was so feeble that I could only just manage to get him into the stable before he fell down. Then I knew that ere long all would be over, and though for the next hour we did everything that was possible, under the circumstances, to restore him, it was but too apparent that he must die. The driver having

seen to and fed the remaining three horses, took himself off to the house, whither my husband soon followed him. I could not, however, leave the poor beast; the feeling that he had been faithful to us, even to his last mite of strength, was strong upon me; and though my presence could in no way benefit him, it seemed cruel and unfeeling to leave him in his hours of agony. So I sat on beside him moistening his dry mouth, in which, had it not been for the water, the tongue would have shrivelled up to nothing, and stroking the black, glossy neck which had bent itself proudly for the last time. The horse seemed grateful for these little attentions; the distressing moaning, to which at first he had given vent, gradually died away, and he lay quite still. Suddenly he raised his head, and the bright, quick eye glanced towards me as though speaking its dumb thanks: then, with a slight quiver, which ran through the whole of its frame, the head sunk slowly to its former position, the eye became blue and glazed, and the willing, noble spirit which was given to man for use, but not abuse, had gone—whither, all the science of humanity has failed to fathom.

The sufferings and final death of the poor beast, added to the weariness of the day's drive, had the effect of considerably depressing my

spirits. On entering the house, I found my husband and the driver seated in one corner of the principal room, conversing in low voices. An air of silence and oppressive neatness pervaded the scene; in another corner was seated the Frau, with her hands before her; while round the room children of many ages were also seated, apparently unoccupied. On entering, they all rose, but did not quit their places; and this recalled to my mind the Boer custom of shaking hands with everybody. I therefore proceeded to journey round the room, and, having shaken hands with everyone, found my way to an empty seat, between two prim-looking little girls, who were sitting bolt upright. Ensconcing myself, I too relapsed into a statue, which, at the expiration of an hour, was awakened for a few minutes into life by having to go through another series of hand-shaking with several men and women who arrived. These I made out to be visitors, and the women having exchanged a few monosyllables, relapsed into silence; while the men, to whom the custom of removing their hats was unknown, sat down and began to smoke. In about five minutes they all rose, and each went through the ceremony of hand-shaking all round before terminating their short visit. I could not help laughing as I

watched the grave demeanour of a small girl of about four years old as she went through the ceremony, and it was to me a matter of wonder how her wrist had not come to pieces long ago, as she was evidently an old hand at the work. There was not a baby in the room, or I should have been curious to see whether it too was subjected to this machine-like process; but for a long time my wrist and hand felt quite tender, and did not recover for several days from the effects of these prolonged greetings. The visit over, we again relapsed into statues, and I was just beginning to wonder whether we were expected to remain as such all night, and whether they ever indulged in food in this house, when the English girl appeared and began to lay the cloth. Then each statue, one by one, disappeared into an adjoining kitchen, followed by the Frau, upon which I and my husband simultaneously pricked up courage enough to break the silence, and inquired of the girl what time they fed. She replied that supper would be ready almost immediately, and proceeded to disappear in the same direction as the others. At length the food was brought in, and followed in triumphal procession by the whole family. It consisted of the inevitable Boer food, viz. boiled mutton bone, on

which the fat of the animal preponderated largely over the lean. A plate of fat was placed in front of me, a piece of bread, and a cup of tea. There was no salt forthcoming to make the fat palatable, and sugar was a thing unknown in the tea. Being hungry, I, however, bolted my food, the while indulging in covert glances of amusement at my husband's face of silent despair. To think that he should be reduced, after all, to drinking tea, and to see him actually swallowing it, was almost too ludicrous. I fairly laughed outright, which at once drew upon me the astonished glances of Frau and family, who doubtless thought that they had unwittingly admitted a raving lunatic into their house. Seeing the impression I had created, I hastily endeavoured to remedy the mistake, and, during the remainder of the meal, behaved in the most exemplary manner. But when the family rose to go to bed, and the English girl showed us the way to our room, the relief we experienced was indeed heartfelt; the wearying experiences of the day had been almost too much of a good thing, and we longed for a rest, which was greatly needed. In the clean, cosy little room into which we were ushered that rest came quickly. The couch allotted to myself was composed almost entirely of feather-bed,

covered with sheets of snowy whiteness. With a fervent blessing on the hospitable Frau, who had given us the best of what she possessed, I was soon buried in the folds of the feather-bed. After that I remember no more: the great god Sleep had come in gently unawares—that sleep which brings its comfort to the weary, the sorrow-burdened, and the suffering; it came to dispel the effects of a depressing day,—to give its golden help to rest and refreshment. And so it did. On the following morning we were up with the sun, and having routed the driver out of his slothful sleep in the carriage, where he had ensconced himself, we proceeded to arrange the horses in “unicorn” fashion. As the fellow wheeler to the one that had died stood at least 16.2, and the ponies were not much over 14 hands, the effect produced may be imagined when one of these latter was placed alongside the former animal. However, they went well together, and that being all that was required of them, we journeyed along easily enough. At a wayside inn, near a stream enjoying the name of Mud River, we managed to purchase a substitute in the place of the dead horse; which purchase came not a moment too soon, one of the ponies taking it into his head to evince signs of illness.

As we proceeded, he grew worse and worse, and, unwilling to repeat the tragedy of the day before, we called a halt at a farmhouse some ten miles on the road. Here another purchase was deemed advisable, and a thin, raw-boned horse secured on the spot, the farmer taking the sick animal and £15 in exchange. In making the bargain we felt that we had been done; but as there was no choice for it one way or the other if we wished to get down country speedily, we resigned ourselves to the prospect of having to go on buying relays all the way to Ladysmith! On the fourth day of our travels, having averaged about fifty miles a day, our cross-country journey came to an end at Winburg. Here the Mud River purchase nearly succumbed, and was only saved by the timely emptying of a bottle of brandy into its inside, for which extravagance we fully expected to be charged five pounds! In this surmise we were agreeably surprised, when, before taking our departure the next morning, we came to pay the bill. The modest charge of £6 for ourselves and horses was all that my money-making friend thought fit to ask us on this occasion; but as we had had very little to eat, still less to drink, and a dirty, uncomfortable room to sleep in, I do not think I am far wrong in

surmising that his profit reached the entire sum in question.

In spite of the bottle of brandy, another forty miles completely knocked up our Mud River purchase, and, arrived at Senekal, we were obliged to conclude another bargain with a Boer, who did not forget his own interest in the transaction. Our fresh purchase was a rough but strong-looking pony, who treated the whip with supreme indifference, chose his own pace—which neither coaxing nor beating would induce him to alter—and was provokingly deliberate and slow over each meal, which he munched with a satisfied air. An original pony he decidedly was, and that he possessed a will of his own we were not long in finding out; but that he also possessed a conscience I am bound to maintain, for, although he was very deliberate and chose his own pace, as I have already remarked, he worked honestly at the collar and did his full share conscientiously.

On the eighth day of our travels we at length crossed from the Orange Free State into Natal, and arrived on the summit of De Beer's Pass in the Drakensberg. On the road we had several times cautioned the driver as to the steepness of this pass, and impressed upon him the necessity of careful driving during the descent. I must

confess we had not much confidence in his coachmanship, and as he was continually entertaining us with accounts of the different spills he had been in, as well as the numerous "fares" at Kimberley which he had upset, we were not greatly reassured thereby. On this occasion, and heedless of our warnings, without an attempt to pull the horses together, he started down the hill at a brisk trot. Though we ordered him to try and steady them a bit, it was quickly apparent that such a course was no longer possible, and the only thing to do was to sit tight and trust to their not falling, which, from the great pace at which we were going, appeared inevitable at every moment.

Ere long we perceived that he had lost complete control over the animals, the two leaders breaking into a gallop, as, in a few minutes, the wheelers likewise did. The pace was now frightful, and though the driver was unaware, I recalled to mind the fact that we were rapidly approaching the winding portion of the road, on one side of which a sheer precipice fell away. From our position at the back of the cart, we were almost powerless to move and quite unable to reach the reins, whereas the driver was free and in a position to jump out at any moment.

"We're always getting into carriage accidents, no matter where we go," I remarked to my husband; "and now we're decidedly in for another, so we had better get as free as we can in order to bundle out somehow or other, if the horses are not stopped before we reach the narrow, unprotected part of the road."

On this suggestion we were proceeding to act, and were engaged in struggling and wriggling ourselves as best we could out of our cramped position, when suddenly down went the carriage on the side on which I was seated,—a confused jumble of falling, of struggling, of sounds of kicking horses and breaking straps, and a firm idea that we were over the precipice and done for, ensuing; after which I felt myself crushed by a heavy weight, which was followed by a confused buzzing in my ears, and then came the calm feeling of resignation to the inevitable, which those who have faced death and given up all hope know so well. From this point of the proceedings, I remember no more until a sudden sense of relief sent the blood coursing with a warm glow all over my body, the numbed, helpless feeling subsiding. This was caused by the uplifting of the carriage from me, the weight of which once removed, I was very soon all right

again, and beyond a severe shaking had suffered no injury.

The place into which the carriage had been upset, was a deep crevice off the road some ten feet down. Finding himself quite powerless to stop the animals, and seeing the danger ahead, the driver had with a last effort guided them off the road on to a level piece of side ground, in the hopes of there being able to arrest them. Even while doing so, he saw the crevice into which we had fallen ; but it was too late to stop, so, calling to us to look out for ourselves,—a matter easier said than done,—he had jumped from the carriage. Then came the crash ; my husband was thrown clear off the cart, while hapless I remained buried beneath.

However, all's well that ends well. None of us were hurt, the horses were effectually stopped and sobered, and beyond one or two fractured springs, even the carriage sustained no injury. Help was speedily obtained from the Good Hope Inn hard by, where we also sought shelter for the night ; and that evening we discussed our adventures over the supper table with some Orange Free State Boers, who were all more or less inebriated, but withal not offensive. At last one, growing a little more excited than the rest,

seized me by the hand, and in one breath assured me that he would come and see me when he came to England, and that "Zur Avelan Wooodde (Sir Evelyn Wood), he was a sjntleman,—oh yes, he was a sjntleman;" when, failing to see what connection his visiting me in England and Sir Evelyn Wood being a gentleman had with each other, I disengaged my hand from the grasp of my excited friend, and leaving him to my husband to entertain, went off to bed.

We reached Ladysmith next day in time for luncheon, and dined that evening with the 14th Hussars. I here received information of the approaching entry into Zululand of Sir Evelyn Wood, who was to be accompanied by three squadrons of cavalry. This decided us to return to Newcastle at once; so, after several days pleasantly spent in Ladysmith, we bade farewell to our driver, and wishing him success in his return journey to Kimberley, which we did not envy him, the services of Nancy, and Punch, and Fatty Cavendish were once more requisitioned, and the trekking on the hard high road resumed; two days later finding us in our old camp at Bennett's Drift, busily preparing for the proposed expedition into Zululand.

CHAPTER XXI.

PREPARATION FOR ZULULAND—MORNING OF DEPARTURE—
A SCRAMBLE FOR BREAKFAST—A SCENE OF CONFUSION—
HORRIBLE CRUELTY—NO WATER—BRIDGE-MAKING—AN
UNWELCOME ORDER—SEKETWAYO AND CEISHWAYO.

BUT though the plan of march through Zululand had been drawn out, the date of the departure of the squadrons had not yet been decided upon at headquarters. When at length it was, the notice given was somewhat short ; but it caught no one napping, and found readiness the order of the day. The three squadrons of cavalry ordered out for the occasion consisted of one of the 15th Hussars, one of the 6th Inniskilling Dragoons, and one of the 14th Hussars, the whole under the command of Colonel Luck, C.B., 15th Hussars. The last-named squadron being quartered at Ladysmith, received orders to begin their march from a lower point, and join the main body of the troops at the Buffalo River, so that all might enter Zululand together ; while, previous to this order,

the generals rode down country to Ladysmith and inspected the regiment in its entirety.

So at length the morning dawned for our departure. It rose in a cold, damp mist, which shortly relapsed into a confirmed drizzle. Everything was wet,—tents, horse clothing, and baggage,—and the task of packing and loading up was rendered intensely disagreeable in consequence. Punctually at 5 A.M. the *reveillé* sounded; it came through the mist with startling distinctness, which made me spring up from a sound sleep and consult my watch. Yes, sure enough it was five o'clock and no mistake; but oh! how cold and dark and wet everything felt and looked, as I drew aside the hangings of my tent. No one else had heard the *reveillé*, or, if they had, probably thought it was but a dream; so I was forced, by shouting to every one to get up, to dispel any such illusion.

Having succeeded in arousing the servants and the waggon-driver—the latter of whom lay huddled up in a blanket under the cart, looking for all the world like a mummy—I proceeded actively to engage in the packing. Before long our goods and chattels were collected into two heaps—the smallest of which was destined to accompany us on our travels; while the other was to be relegated to the guardroom, consisting

as it did of collections, trophies of the chase, and such like, which we could not drag about wherever we went, and therefore left behind in the care of the sergeant of that department. By six o'clock everything was ready for loading up, at which hour a corporal and six privates arrived on the scene, by whom everything was quickly placed in the waggon, to which ten patient oxen stood yoked. Ox transport had been decided upon for the expedition, in consequence of the great quantity of food required to be carried for mules; added to which nearly every available animal of this description, except those required for the General's use, had been ordered up to Pretoria to assist in bringing the troops and stores down country. The order to march at six o'clock punctually had been given the previous day, but on arriving in the 15th Hussars' camp it was evident that yet another hour must elapse before everything could be got under weigh. The scene was a diversified one, and partook somewhat of confusion; men were to be seen in every direction rushing about with bundles, or boxes, or parcels of some description or another, eagerly inquiring the whereabouts of their particular waggon, on which some particular article had to be placed. No one seemed to be able to furnish information to his

neighbour, though at the same time, he was willing enough to ask of others what he could not give himself. Near the officers' tents, two or three large hooded waggons were being rapidly filled; while the mess-sergeant, assisted by several men, seemed intent in loading up the mess vehicle with boxes innumerable of Tivoli beer and other delicacies. In the marquee itself I found several officers busily engaged in negotiating coffee, boiled eggs, or hot bacon—not a few scalding their mouths in their hasty efforts to dispose of their coffee, as the voice of the colonel outside was heard hurrying matters on, and calling to the officers on duty to form up their men. In the general scramble I was, however, well provided for, and made a hearty breakfast, after which I went outside and found my husband struggling with a box of Tivoli beer, which he meditated adding to our stores. Whether he effected his purpose or not, I did not see, and forgot at the time to inquire, my attention being taken up in watching the waggons getting under weigh. Before long they were all on the move, our own amongst them, and the march on Zululand fairly began.

Ere it had proceeded a quarter of a mile, the mess waggon broke down. This catastrophe I

laid to the door of those boxes of Tivoli beer which I had seen the sergeant depositing with so much care on the cart not long before; and as I passed the scene of the wreck I could not help laughing at the lachrymose expression depicted on Fergusson's face, who, as acting mess-sergeant of the expedition, had charge of the waggon. Some time must necessarily elapse ere it could be mended or a fresh one procured, and here he was evidently *planté* for the better part of the morning. The squadron had trotted on towards Fort Amiel, and, having crossed a small spruit, an offshoot of the Icandu River, had formed up to await the waggons and afford any assistance that might be required. This, ere long, was much called for at a short but very perpendicular hill, which rose abruptly from the spruit in question to the level of the Fort. In spite of gallant efforts on the part of the oxen, several waggons stuck fast, and it required many and many united hauls on the part of the men before they could be extricated. All this took up a good deal of time, and it was nearly nine o'clock before the last waggon was seen safely to the summit, and the troops became at liberty to proceed. On arriving at the Icandu, however, another halt had to be called, and a delay even

more lengthened and tedious undergone in superintending its passage, for the ford was an awkward one, lying deeply in a hollow, and the waggons descending with a rush into the rapid waters, some difficulty was found in preventing the poor beasts yoked to them from coming to a dead stop for the purpose of slaking their thirst. In this way several spans got hopelessly entangled, and much delay was occasioned in their unravelling; added to which the way leading out of the spruit rose in an abrupt incline, which, speedily becoming slippery from the drippings of several waggons that had already passed, rendered it almost impossible for the animals to retain their footing. Down they kept falling one by one, the confusion so occasioned being frightful. Altogether, what with the shouts of the soldiers and the fiendish yells of the drivers and conductors, the scene became one somewhat in accord with the descriptions of the infernal regions.

The sun was high up in the heavens before the last of a hundred waggons was got safely across, and four hours of continued struggling resulted in a distance of about three miles being placed between our then position—which was in the heart of Newcastle—and the camp we had left that morning in the mist. “A hundred

waggon!" I think I hear my reader exclaim; "all that for three squadrons of cavalry?" And yet so it ever is: a like number of Boers' could have done the journey we were undertaking comfortably with half-a-dozen; or an equal number of Zulus could have tripped in one day the distance we proposed to do in ten; their food they could send on alive and ahead of them, their drink they could find in the pure springs of the Veldt, their couch would be Nature's own when they halted at night, and their tent the bright or clouded canopy of heaven, whichever it happened to be. But with us it is different: the civilised soldier must have his tents and his commissariat always in due attendance. What would soldiering and war come to if the expense of so much unnecessary paraphernalia was done away with?

On leaving Newcastle it was pleasant to be able to put one's horse into a gallop, and feel that some movement was really taking place, of which the recent dawdling about for so many hours had made one almost doubtful. The long line of waggon was now extending several miles in length, and the scenes as we passed along it were many and varied. With the Icandu business over, the troops had as before trotted on ahead, and when I came up with them they were

halted, and busy superintending another passage —this time a boggy place in the Veldt. For a time I stood by and watched the process; but our waggon arriving, and being got safely over, I turned and rode on with it. The brutality of the drivers, and above all that of the conductors, to their animals, sickened and disgusted me. For nearly six hours the poor brutes had been in the yoke, the last four under a burning sun. The prospect of yet another two before they were released was before them, and yet, tired and fainting for food and water, neither lash nor goading punishment was spared to make them proceed.

In one of the first chapters of this book I have alluded to the unenviable life of a trek-ox especially that of a Government one, or one in the pay of the Government. Knowing that he will be remunerated for its death, the owner makes no endeavours to spare it. Half-starved and overworked, these poor brutes struggle through their cruel, and, happily for them, short existence. For them life has never known its share of happiness; born to pain, they live and die in that heritage of woe.

At the end of seven hours' trekking the Ingagane River was reached, on the opposite

side of which Colonel Luck decided to halt for the night. As my cousin was acting in the capacity of staff officer to the Colonel, he at once proceeded to mark out the camp, and the squadrons, who shortly afterwards put in an appearance, proceeded to take up their allotted quarters. But though we were fortunate in getting our waggon at once, and our tents pitched, many a weary hour went by before the whole convoy had crossed the ford. Long after darkness had set in they were still arriving, and it being too late to liberate the oxen for fear they should stray, the poor hungry brutes remained tied to their waggons all night without the food or water which they so greatly needed. No wonder that many were found dead or dying next day.

On the following morning the trek was resumed, and proved even severer than that of the previous day. No one appeared to be acquainted with the line of march we were pursuing—distances being miscalculated and underrated in the most confusing manner possible by the very men who professed to have a knowledge of the country. Hour after hour wore its slow march along; the oxen drooped beneath the fierce rays of a scorching sun, their dry swollen tongues clenched between their teeth, and the thick,

dust-speckled foam dropping from their nostrils. Far and wide stretched a barren Veldt, whereon no sign of water showed itself, though many an eye swept it in keen search. The country around appeared silent and deserted, shunned apparently both by man and beast. At length, wearied with the crawling pace at which we were moving, I forsook the column, and rode on ahead in the hopes of coming upon a spruit, which would have been welcome news to return with to those in the rear. Some five miles on the road I fell in with a farmhouse, which turned out to be occupied by an Englishman of the name of Dick, whom my first care was to question on the supply of water obtainable in the locality. His reply was not reassuring, as it appeared that the spruit on which he depended was dried up to the dimensions of a tiny rivulet, which would be useless for the purpose of watering animals. Three or four miles farther on he, however, assured me we should find a good supply of both grass and water, suitable in every way for outspanning. While we were talking, Colonel Luck, my cousin, and several other officers appeared on the scene, to whom the same information as had been given to me was repeated, and received with expressions of disappointment and disgust; for, on seeing the

farmhouse, they had made certain of coming upon water at last. There was nothing, however, to be done but to wait for the squadron to come up, and then, having left word for the waggons to follow on, to trot forward in search of a suitable place to outspan. While waiting for the squadrons I dismounted and went in search of a deserted lion's den, which the farmer informed me I should find not far off. A wide opening in some masses of rock attracted my attention, and, having returned and armed myself with a light, I departed, accompanied by several of the others whom my vivid description of what was to be seen had filled with curiosity and a desire to explore. The cavern, for such it was, turned out to be a big one, and full of a lot of trappy pits, into which, at every moment, we ran a risk of falling. At the far end skeletons of animals and heaps of decayed bones were discovered, which we concluded to be the remnants of the last occupant's daily meals. In this secluded fortress he had doubtless feasted and revelled right royally until the approach of civilisation had driven him to become a wanderer and a vagabond on the face of the earth. By the arrival of the troops at Dick's farm, our expedition of discovery was brought to a close, and we hurried back and joined Colonel

Luck, whom we found on the point of starting. A trot of four or five miles at length brought us in sight of the outspanning ground, where the horses were at once watered, knee-haltered, and turned out to graze. Two good hours or more elapsed before the first waggon hove in sight, the oxen positively staggering along in the most pitiable condition. During that time we had not been idle; for, on arriving at the place of outspan, a boggy spruit was discovered, across which it became apparent that until a safe road was made no waggon could venture. Relays of men were at once ordered up to construct a secure crossing, and every available hand set to work to collect stones, and grass, and rushes for the purpose. On the arrival of the waggons a strong compact bridge had been constructed, over which the long straggling convoy passed in safety, and, forming up in one immense line, the weary, famished animals were released from the yoke to find what food they could in the two short hours' law granted them for that purpose. Meanwhile the mess waggon had been made to disgorge some of its contents, and we were soon busily engaged with the luncheon which the efforts of Fergusson were not slow to provide. I cannot quite remember what fell to my share; but it

was something very good, partaking of the subtle flavour of pork pie, doubly enjoyed from the fact that my breakfast that morning had been, in the hurry of an early departure, little more than an apology. Luncheon over, an hour of luxurious ease was enjoyed. Every one settled himself into comfortable attitudes of repose—Captain Sullivan, my cousin, and myself, sharing the welcome shade afforded underneath the mess waggon, where, I'm afraid, I was malicious enough to enjoy the occupation which I set myself, of preventing these two from falling asleep, which they were very desirous of doing. My efforts were successful, and, in spite of their remonstrances and threats, I managed by various cunningly-planned devices to keep them awake, until suddenly the voice of the Colonel was heard giving the order to saddle up and inspan, which decided the conflict in my favour. While everybody was busily engaged in obeying this order, a messenger from General Buller arrived bearing instructions for Colonel Luck to proceed as far as the Buffalo River that night, on the banks of which the General, who had preceded the column the day before, was encamped. Every effort to hurry on the inspanning of the waggons was therefore made, for the afternoon was already far

gone, and the distance between our then position and the Buffalo was considerable. When the conductors learnt our destination they remonstrated, and, remonstrance proving vain, they became sulky. At this there was small cause for wonder; for their oxen—worn, footsore, and in very poor condition—were in no fit state to proceed, while the mere fact of inspanning them before they had sufficiently rested and fed themselves simply meant death to many. As it was, several had already, since the outspan, succumbed to their inevitable fate, sinking to the ground, from which neither threats nor torture could move them—they would never rise again.

With the shades of evening fast setting in, the Buffalo River was reached, and about forty or fifty waggons got safely across. Darkness stopped the progress of the remainder of the column, which was forced to outspan on the wrong side of the river; in consequence whereby many of the officers and men were deprived of their tents and baggage, and had to seek the hospitality of their comrades and friends. At this place we were joined by the squadron of the 14th Hussars, who, mounted on their white Persian horses, presented a very martial appearance. For a long time I puzzled myself to find out what it was that

made such a marked difference between the 14th and the 15th. Both were as fine a body of men as one might wish to see; but there was no mistaking the one for the other. The clue was at length discovered in the fact that whereas the 14th all wore beards, the 15th were closely shaved, while the helmets of the latter were of a peculiarly good shape, which was enhanced by the white, artistically folded puggery around them. The white horses of the 14th looked sleek and fat, and well cared for, their light colour forming an agreeable background to the dark, English horses of the Inniskillings, and the variously-coloured colonials of the 15th.

In consideration of the wretched state of the oxen, a very short march was made next day, the Colonel deciding to encamp at the first place of outspan. We were here visited by large crowds of natives, who came running from their kraals full of curiosity, and to whom the band of the Inniskillings was a matter of extreme wonder and interest. A fine young Zulu, a son of the reigning chief, Seketwayo, made his appearance with a note for Colonel Luck from General Buller, who had gone straight through to the Blood River, and finding the road somewhat confusing, had despatched young Seketwayo to the column.

to act as guide. Some excitement was at first caused by the idea which gained ground that this Zulu was Cetshwayo's son, the Prince Dinuzulu; but as the latter is a youth of fourteen, and the Zulu in question was a man of apparently twenty-five, the illusion became quickly dispelled. With the band playing gay music, and attended by crowds of admiring natives, the march on the Blood River was resumed, and long ere the frosty mists of early morning had cleared off, the column was well under weigh. With comparatively few losses in the way of oxen, the journey was successfully performed that day; at four o'clock Conference Hill was passed, Bemba's Kop loomed in sight, the stretching, rocky, hill-bound plains of Zululand appeared; and by half-past four the squadrons had crossed the Blood River, and once more the foot of the British soldier was pressed on Zulu soil.

Here we found General Buller already encamped, and learnt from him that General Wood was momentarily expected. His arrival was soon heralded by the approach of several mule waggons, which rattled up and disgorged their numerous contents. Before long the Union Jack marked the spot where headquarters was established, and the roomy, comfortable, house-shaped tent of the

General was erected. Then Sir Evelyn, attended by Major Fraser, Captain Slade, and Mr. Hamilton, arrived on the scene. The miniature camp settled into something like order and neatness; far and wide the foreloupers might be distinguished herding and bringing in the cattle; the horses, which on arrival had been turned out to graze, were driven in, captured, fed, and blanketed up for the night; and then the great gold sun which had seemed to linger behind the distant mountains as though an interested spectator of the busy scene, flashed his bright smile on the fast darkening earth, lingered yet awhile in the rose and purple and opal tints of his setting glory, then, passing away from the earth he had gladdened, sought other worlds to cheer; the chill and gloom of night fell over the camp, and the land of the noble savage was plunged in darkness.

CHAPTER XXII.

KAMBULA—PLEASANT REMINISCENCES—A DUSKY BEAUTY—
FOR KING AND COUNTRY—THE HEROISM OF MIGHT AND
RIGHT—NATURE'S BEAUTEOUS SCENE—A BANQUET.

THE evening of his arrival at the Blood River, Sir Evelyn had intimated to us his intention of visiting the battlefield of Kambula on the following day, and had invited us, as well as a number of officers, to accompany him. In view of the good pasturage and abundance of water to be found in the locality around the camp, a day's rest had been decided upon, and there was to be no marching on the morrow.

Kambula Hill, whereon the battle of that name was fought, lay some twenty miles away from our present encampment, within easy riding distance, so that a pleasurable excursion was looked forward to as an agreeable change in the monotony of the past few days' trekking. In a visit which, later on that evening, Captain Slade paid to our tent, he advised us to provide ourselves with

second horses, as the travelling would in all probability be somewhat speedy.

So next morning, having breakfasted in the mess-tent of the 15th, where we found Colonel Luck and several others hard at it, our horses were brought round and we rode down to the General's tent. Sir Evelyn was ready and awaiting us, setting an example of punctuality to others who had not yet arrived; while General Buller we found in the midst of tent-striking—he being about to move on a march ahead. Leaving the laggards to follow in our wake, the General gave the signal to start by mounting his horse and leading us forward at a gallop. The bright, fresh morning, the exhilarating air, and, above all, the consciousness of freedom from ox-waggon and other annoyances, served to raise our spirits to their highest pitch. We sent our horses along at a pace to which for many days they had been little accustomed, and which, doubtless, caused them some surprise. That surprise was, however, I am inclined to think, on the pleasurable side, to judge by the way in which they took hold of their bits, and the disinclination which they evinced to being restrained. Altogether we formed a very merry party, doing our best to make time fly, and succeeding therein. Captain Slade, who had

served during the Zulu war under Sir Evelyn, and who had also accompanied the Empress Eugénie in her travels through the country, was full of anecdotes of both occasions. Every spot brought its reminiscences, every landmark had its tale to tell; and I am inclined to think that during that ride the gallant aide-de-camp lived those portions of his life over again. If he did, his dreams were doubtless pleasant ones.

But though we galloped when we could, the way was not always plain sailing, frequent treacherous looking bogs, and grass, and bush-grown gullies, having to be got over. On these occasions the light weights had a decided advantage of the heavy brigade, and when the utmost care and caution was required on the part of the latter, the former could afford an appearance of recklessness. This, however, as proved later in the day—in the case of Major Fraser—was not always warranted. Some ten miles on the way our party fell in with Walkinshaw, who, riding one horse, and leading another which carried the precious luncheon panniers, was making the best of his way over hill and dale, bogs and gullies, with the greatest *sang froid*. Judging from the line he was taking, the old waggon track had evidently no charms for him,

and he preferred the more tortuous and risky travelling of a point-to-point line. Often we watched him with fear at our hearts; but lest we should be considered greedy, kept our anxiety to ourselves. A good fright, however, awaited us a little further on, where we were suddenly confronted by a gully of more than ordinary depth and blindness. We pulled up our horses to reconnoitre it carefully, and after some sliding and slipping, and one or two splutters amongst the heavy weights, managed to get safely over. Then we turned to look for Walkinshaw—when, oh horror! our forebodings were being realised in good earnest, as we saw him dismounted and struggling to extricate the animal with the luncheon baskets from a deep bog into which it had sunk. All delicacy of being thought greedy at once vanished as we galloped to his rescue. Captain Slade being the first to arrive, was quickly off his horse, and actively engaged when we came up in helping to drag forth the wretched animal. A little timely assistance effected the matter, and the baskets having been examined, the reassuring “all right” sent a glow of thankfulness to our hearts. Counselling Walkinshaw to be a little less daring, we turned and galloped after Sir Evelyn, who, with Major Fraser and Colonel Luck, was riding

slowly on ahead. Before long the Ingabe - Ka Hawane Mountain, or the Stronghold of Hawane, came well into view ; and on breasting a low hill a small village of kraals appeared in sight, at which Sir Evelyn informed us was located the old chief Tinta, whom he had captured during the war, and afterwards settled in this district. There, sure enough, we found the old man surrounded by his family, and very much delighted to see Sir Evelyn again, whom he recognised at once. From behind some palisades several young girls could be distinguished peering forth ; but nothing would induce them to come out and show themselves, they being, perhaps, of not so trustful a nature as the older generation. One of them that I caught sight of was exceedingly pretty, there being a good deal of the Arabian about the shape of her features, not the least of her charms consisting in a pair of heavily-fringed, laughing eyes, which seemed to mock my efforts to get a good view of her.

Bidding the old chief farewell, we rode on to a high plateau, from which a magnificent view was obtained. Straight in front of us, some three miles distant, lay Kambula, extending in a long undulating ridge, which appeared to run from left to right, in one immense line, from the wooded

range of heights at the back of Kambula to the mighty slopes of the Zuinge Nek, many miles away. Far and wide stretched what appeared to be an interminable succession of hills and dales, rough rugged mountains, and giant rocks; while, behind us, through the golden haze that enveloped it, the shadowy outline of the Inshlazatye Mountain could be distinguished, the beauty of its ever green slopes, which we were ere long to behold, as yet withheld from the gazer's eye.

On this plateau Major Fraser lingered behind to make a sketch or two of the surrounding scene, I remaining with him. The long ridge from the plateau of Kambula to the Zuinge had fascinated me, and I felt as if I could never tire of letting my eyes wander over the maze of its intricate and manifold windings. Over that vast tract of rugged ground the weary retreat from the Inhlobane Mountain had been effected; backwards to the wooded slopes they toiled—thither they came; and here this gallant band of Englishmen resolved to stand at bay. Then, across the rugged country they had traversed the day before, advanced against them those 26,000 warriors of Cetshwayo, who for king and country came to strike a blow at the invaders of their dearly loved land. What to them was death?

They feared it not. Was it not enough that an ambitious policy was doing its best to turn their country upside down, drag from them their king, whom, spite of the many slanders levelled at himself and his rule, they loved and were loyal to? Yes, it was a noble foe against whom the English fought that day. In thousands they came on, and in thousands the sweeping fire of our men mowed them down. While hope of success remained, they fought and fell; then, when hope vanished and the swords of the mounted men committed fearful havoc amongst them, they scorned to beg for mercy,—no prayer for quarter was ever heard from the lips of those noble savages who died for king and country that day.

Dreaming in this wise, I was awakened to the reality of the present by the voice of Major Fraser, intimating to me that his sketching was completed. We hastened down the steep slopes of the plateau as quickly as we could, in order to rejoin Sir Evelyn and the rest of the party, whom we could distinguish some distance off. We found the going exceedingly rough, large masses of rocks overgrown by long thick grass, and vegetation bringing us frequently to grief, and delaying our progress considerably; but, in spite of these manifold hindrances to rapid travel,

ling, we were successful in joining the others ere the ascent of the rugged facings of the Kambula plateau was commenced. When we came to set about it, the climb proved one of great severity for the horses, both on account of its extreme abruptness, and that the ground was thickly strewn with sharp, loose stones, which gave way beneath their feet in the most distressing manner. Sweating profusely, they, however, stuck gamely to their work, and we were at length rewarded for our exertions by reaching the summit.

The first portion of the ground over which we rode was thickly strewn with Zulu graves, which rose in roughly-erected heaps of stones on all sides. But what principally attracted our attention was the glimpse which we suddenly caught of the remnant of the old fort that had assisted so staunchly to repel the advance of the Zulu hosts. To the many present, to whom this scene was not a familiar one, it was not even deemed necessary to explain what the ruined earthworks, breasting the sides of a low mound ahead, meant. Who is not familiar with the many episodes of the Zulu war? but above all, who has not heard and read with thrilling interest the accounts of that gallant defence which, in the attack on Kambula Hill, Colonel Evelyn Wood so successfully sustained?

'Twas a band of brave men under a brave commander, who fought that day. They fought with the coolness and courage of true soldiers, pitted against a savage though a noble foe. Brave as they were, their courage was equalled by their enemies; the struggle was one of determination—one of life and death; and thus they fought,—fought on through the whole of that memorable day. Deeds of valour were performed,—deeds which the annals of gallant actions must ever preserve for England's pride and glory; and yet, looking back on that terrible conflict, when brave men fell down and died, and the blood of the British soldier flowed on Kambula Hill in the fierce struggle of might over right—looking back, I say, the policy which took their life's blood rises up like a dark and terrible cloud, and the heart which joyfully exults over the valour of her noble dead cannot stifle that regret which will arise, that so much gallantry should have been sacrificed in so unjust a cause.

As the horses were somewhat fatigued after their arduous climb, our first care was to search for a suitable place near water on which to off-saddle. This was quickly found in a hollow on the other side of the ridge, and here the animals were knee-haltered and turned out to

graze. Walkinshaw arriving at this moment, the luncheon panniers were at once seized upon and examined, and the contents having been laid out on a smooth stone ledge, which admirably served the place of a table, we proceeded, hungry as hunters, to negotiate them. On the sunny slopes of Kambula, where not long since a gallant Colonel had stood amidst the roar of cannon and the hail of bullets and assegais coolly directing his men, the more peaceful scene now presented itself of a gallant General eating sandwiches, drinking claret, and surrounded by his followers, who were busily engaged in following their chief's example.

An excellent lunch over, we all accompanied Sir Evelyn up the hill to the fort, where the General was kind enough to give us an interesting description of the battle, pointing out the different points from which he had been assailed, as well as the various spots of interest connected with the affair. Piles of empty cartridges yet remained, showing in many places where the fight had been sustained with great vigour; while around the cattle laager, where the conflict at one time had been most obstinately waged, pieces of burst shells were picked up and treasured as mementoes of the visit. Not far away from the fort the cemetery containing the bodies of the officers who

fell that day could be distinguished. We visited it and found it in perfect order. Flowers which Captain Slade had planted a year before on the graves, on the occasion of the Empress's visit to the spot, were flourishing; while not the least lovely of them all was the young verdure of the Veldt itself, which, bursting into the bloom of early spring, shot forth the radiant colours of its myriads of variegated flowers, so that the slope on which the cemetery was situated seemed as it were one large garden. Several hours were spent roaming over the battlefield, and inspecting the many spots of interest; and, all too soon as it seemed to many of us, the order to saddle up and begin the homeward journey was given. We hastened, however, to obey; the horses having been captured, in a very short time we were all ready to start; and, the General having mounted, we set off down the steep, slippery slopes of Kambula at a famous pace. As everybody took their own line, our progress soon assumed the aspect of a point-to-point race; but many, in their over confidence in themselves and their certainty of finding the way, found it on several occasions blocked by suddenly yawning precipices or chasms of great breadth and depth. These obstructions forced them to halt, and, retracing their footsteps, seek

safety in our wake. Several were thrown considerably into the background in consequence, and left well out of the race. In the passage of a deep spruit Sir Evelyn and Major Fraser ran a narrow risk of being drowned ; indeed the gallant Major and his horse were completely submerged in a treacherous hole, but fortunately escaped with nothing worse than a wetting, which the hot afternoon sun lent its service to dissipate.

Though we had been hurrying over the rough and difficult ground, with the strange perversity of human nature we made the pace much easier upon reaching better going, and prolonged our ride into the cool of evening. With the setting sun tinging the low crest of Conference Hill, the camp on the Blood River was reached, where the party separated and repaired to their various quarters to remove the marks and dust of the day's travelling. On reaching my tent I found that my servant Tom, catching sight of our approach in the distance, had with careful forethought prepared a steaming hot bath therein, which looked very refreshing and tempting, and in which, after indulging in a cup of tea, I soon found myself ; then, when our toilets were completed, we walked down to the General's tent for dinner, where we found a goodly number of

officers already assembled, and where quite a banquet was prepared. During its progress that night plans for the morrow were discussed and a visit to the Inhlobane Mountain determined on. It was arranged that our tent and what baggage we required should be placed on one of the head-quarter waggon, our ox-transport going on with the troops, from whom for a time we should therefore be separated. Ten o'clock on the morrow was fixed for departure,—the column marching at six ; and having settled everything satisfactorily we made our way back to our tent through the slumbering lines of horses and men, stumbling over picket ropes, which in the darkness of the night were not distinguishable, and which a lantern, with which Captain Slade insisted on lighting us home, failed to disclose. Several times we were challenged by the sentries, whose minds were set at rest by the reply of " friend ;" then through the darkness our little tent, with the cheerful fire burning close by, hove in sight, where, bidding goodnight to Captain Slade, we turned in, and soon the land of dreams took the place of reality ; and not once, not twice, but many times that night, I found myself on Kambula, in the ruined fort, by the silent graves, or amidst the rocky scenes of that memorable battlefield where brave men fought and died.

CHAPTER XXIII.

A SECOND EXPEDITION—AN AGREEABLE COMPANION—A RIDE TO THE INHLOBANE—"INKŌS"—A LONELY GRAVE—THE DEATH OF RONALD CAMPBELL—INTENSE THIRST—DESCENT OF THE DEVIL'S PASS—THE GRATEFUL LUXURY OF EASE.

I WAS up betimes on the following morning, superintending the division of our baggage and the loading upon the ox waggon that portion of it which was to accompany the troops on their forward march. Bearing in mind the already somewhat overloaded condition of the General's waggons, I was careful to retain only those things which were absolutely necessary for use, such as our tent and bedding. By seven o'clock everything was ready, and in the wake of the mess waggon, and under the charge of Fergusson, our lumbering vehicle moved slowly away, leaving us alone in our glory amidst the ruins of a deserted camp. At eleven o'clock our things were called for by one of the General's mule waggons, and at 11.30 we made a start of it, shaping our course

in the direction of Tinta's Kraal, which was situated some fifteen miles distant on the White Umvolosi River. The ride thither was a very pleasant one, our way leading us over a rough but grand country, which possessed for me a strange charm. With anecdotes of former days, which the surrounding scenes conjured up in his mind, the General entertained me as we cantered along, and soon the distant outlines of the Inhlobane Mountain and the Zuinge Nek heaving in sight redoubled the many interesting reminiscences which arose to be discussed. A rough, rocky spruit suddenly intervening, brought conversation to an end, and it was with no little anxiety that we pulled up to watch and superintend the passage of the waggons across. This affair was safely accomplished with the wetting of a few things that had by some mishap got loose and were bumped into the stream; they were quickly fished out, however, and packed securely away on the waggons which had formed up in one long line, waiting for the order to continue on their way. Early in the afternoon, we reached Tinta's Kraal, and a cosy little camp was formed under the ruins of some old forts, remnants of the Zulu War, and which commanded a small eminence overlooking the river. Grass

was good and plentiful, and we had the satisfaction of seeing the mules and horses indulging in a good feed, which they appeared duly to appreciate. When the dinner hour arrived, it was the cosy number of eight that obeyed its summons, and a choice *menu* testified to the unfailing resources and ingenuity of Captain Slade as a purveyor of good things. Early to bed was the order of the evening, and the "Good-nights" which went round were accompanied by strict injunctions not to be late on the morrow, six o'clock, or even earlier, being mentioned as the starting hour.

Obedient to these instructions, I was up long before five next morning, taking the precaution to give my horses a good feed of corn apiece. But early as it was, I could make out the figure of Walkinshaw close to the General's tent, and once or twice I heard his voice sharply requesting the cook to arise and light the fire. This was followed a few minutes later by the light of some burning sticks showing itself, which proved that his call had been obeyed, and soon the moving here and there of several figures showed that the camp was awake and astir. Then, on the distant horizon, the dawn of early morning peeped from the crests of Zulu ranges, and an hour later a

row of horses saddled and bridled testified to the fact that all was ready. The appearance of the Général gave the signal for a general occupation of saddles, and in less than a hour from the time of rising, we found ourselves galloping over the Veldt at a famous pace, pointing for the Inhlobane Mountain, which lay some twenty miles away from Tinta's Kraal. The old track formed by General Wood's column during the Zulu war was not as yet completely grass grown, so that we got along at a much greater pace than we could otherwise have done owing to the great height to which the grass grew, in many parts sometimes quite over the horses' ears. Several hours' riding brought us in a line with the Zuinge Nek, keeping to the right of which we bore away towards a group of kraals which we perceived nestling amidst the long grass on the western side of the Inhlobane. By the Zulus who inhabited them we were hospitably received and attended to. Their store of mats was hastily collected and laid on the ground under the shade of some willow fencing, while men hastened to relieve us of our horses, and several boys were despatched to drive in the cows in order to supply us with fresh milk. I could not but admire the total absence of bitterness in their conduct towards us,

although these very people were a portion of that Abaqualusi tribe who were so earnest in their desire for their captive king's return,—that king whom we, their enemies and conquerors, had stolen away from them. Alas! they have since paid the penalty of their loyalty and devotion to the cause of their exiled sovereign in the total annihilation of their tribe by the Chief Oham, whose conduct,—a direct breach of the stipulations made to the Chiefs in Sir Garnet Wolseley's settlement of the country,—neither received censure nor punishment at the hands of a feeble and impotent British Resident. Little we dreamed that bright sunshiny morning, as we lay on their mats, negotiating breakfast and accepting their services, that this fine group of men,—loyal to their king, respectful and hospitable to their conquerors,—would ere long become the victims of a cold-blooded massacre, dying for the loyalty they could not extinguish, murdered most foully for adhering to a noble principle, and, dying, become forgotten and unavenged by the nation which, despoiling them of their own government and king, professes to protect them through its Resident

Breakfast over, we remounted our horses and started once more on our journey. Fol-

lowing a Kaffir path which ran parallel with the southern slopes and crags of the Inhlobane Mountain, we threaded our way through a rough and intricate country, thickly peopled with Zulus, many of whose kraals, arranged in tiny villages, we frequently passed. The inhabitants greeted us with smiles and obeisances, and the stately sounding salutation "Inkōse," accompanied by the hand of the speaker raised towards the heavens, met us on all sides. It is a salutation which has to be heard and seen to be appreciated. Uttered by the stately sons of Zululand in their musical voices, and accompanied by the dignified motion of their right hand above their heads, there is a solemnity and dignity about it which is indescribable.

Six or seven miles' riding brought us to the turning point of the mountain, on to its eastern face. Here the deep gorges and abundance of vegetation presented a decided contrast to the barren hillside we had been hitherto following; while the mighty crags of this colossal rock, covered with giant creepers, were indeed magnificent to behold. It was here that, altering our course, we began to push up the eastern face of the mountain; masses of immense disjointed rock, overgrown by and hidden beneath grass of luxu-

riant growth, rendering it a by no means easy task. Floundering and struggling, slipping and falling, the horses endeavoured to make their way upwards. Here no Kaffir paths lent their friendly guidance to facilitate our progress, and each of the party had to make his way as best he could. Mr. Punch, on whom I was mounted, efficiently asserted his Basuto origin, and lent his sturdy little energies to the task, and the superiority of the lowest weight began to tell in the manner in which he outdistanced the others. About half-way up the face of the mountain I came upon a lonely grave, which was ornamented by a beautiful marble cross. It was enclosed by some rough-made but tidy fencing, and the little garden around the grave showed evidence of kindly and fostering hands. Within the enclosure a Zulu was busily engaged in tending the ferns and flowers that grew around, and in pulling up several weeds that had escaped previous notice. So busy was he, that until I spoke he did not notice me; but, as soon as he did, he sprang to his feet, and his musical voice greeted me with the lofty-sounding "Inkōs!" Jumping off Punch's back, I entered the enclosure and proceeded to examine the inscription on the cross. It told me what I had already guessed, that this lonely

resting-place sheltered the remains of the gallant and lamented Captain Ronald Campbell and Mr. Lloyd, who lost their lives while in attendance on Sir Evelyn Wood during the assault of the Inhlo-bane. My companions at this moment all rejoined me, and, dismounting in a body, gathered silently and quietly around the grave. Few words were spoken; the hearts of every one were too full; memories sad and regretful must have taken possession of those who could recall that day two years ago, to whom the picture of those gallant dead must have returned with silent force; and in these memories the voice became hushed, and the heart welled up in silent mourning and regret. Lonely, but unforgotten, beneath the wild crags of that beautiful mountain, the grave is tended by the noble Zulu. Thither the memory of many will often wander; above it the stars will ever shed their light, the sun will gild each rising morn, shadowed by the crags 'neath which they fell; lonely, but unforgotten, the brave and the gallant sleep side by side in their last long rest.

At this point we left our horses in the charge of Walkinshaw, who, assisted by my husband and Captain Slade, retraced his steps along the route we had come, driving the whole lot of them

before him. The remainder of our party turned to pursue their upward climb, following the line which had been taken by General Buller during his assault of the mountain. To us it was a matter of wonder and admiration as we reflected on the fearful difficulties which this intrepid officer must have faced and overcome in his successful attempt to gain the summit with his following of 200 mounted men. From crag to crag we had to scramble, sometimes on hands and knees—arduous for man, but how far more trying for beast; and had we not known that the ascent had been accomplished, we should have pronounced it almost an impossibility.

For a few brief moments we turned aside to visit the spot whereon Captain Campbell fell. It should be seen for the gallant self-sacrifice of life to be duly appreciated. In order to reach that cave in which the Zulu had taken refuge who had shot Mr. Lloyd and Sir Evelyn's horse; it is necessary to scramble for some fifty yards over huge masses of disjointed rocks which ascend steeply upwards. To charge that cave was certain death, and yet it was imperative that its occupier should be dislodged. The foremost man had little chance of escape in attacking the position, and this was well known to the gallant

officer who, rushing forward, and, followed by Mr. Lysons and three men of the 90th regiment, strove to force an entrance. The cave in question was a deep hollow or chasm in the rocks, and as Captain Campbell sought to enter, he fell, shot dead. This, however, enabled his companions to effect their entrance and despatch the Zulu ere he had time to reload and do further mischief; but it was a success all too dearly purchased in the loss of so gallant a life. Continuing our scrambles over vast masses of rocks and giant boulders, we at length reached the broad, grassy plateau which forms the summit of the Inhlobane. Many of us were a little short of wind, and I must confess that, inured as I was to mountain climbing by many Scottish hills, Swiss-Italian Alps, or snow-capped Andes, surmounted in other days, I was not sorry to reach the top, and could not resist a gasp or two in search of fresh air. After a few minutes' law had been given to rest and get cool, we turned to follow two mountain Zulus who acted the part of guides, and whom we had found on the hillside during our upward progress and pressed into our service. They led us by a short cut across the broad, flat plateau, which had all the appearance of a great plain, and which, had we not known it, we should never have guessed

to be the summit of a high hill. The ground in many places was thickly strewn with the bones and skeletons of horses, while here and there the grinning death's head of some unburied Zulu seemed to mock us with its horrid stare as we passed along. Now and then our somewhat winding course would bring us to the edge of the mountain's northern face, which fell away in sheer precipices, some hundreds of feet down. The view, which lay stretched out in a vast panorama, was exceedingly beautiful; the country away to the eastward being of the most hilly and rugged description, while the blue outlines of the Lebombo Mountains rose grandly majestic on the far horizon. Several miles of this kind of walking made us all feel rather footsore, weary, and limp. For myself, I was undergoing an agony of thirst, and my tongue had become so dry and parched that it had withered up and clung to the roof of my mouth in a most distressing manner. I would have rushed at the veriest puddle in existence had such a puddle come in my way, but no such thing existed on the dry, parched-up, glaring plateau of the great Inhlobane. Far away on the plains below glittered and glistened several lakes of shining silver, the sight of which only aggravated and tortured my thirst, and rendered

it almost insupportable. Walking, too, in a habit and top-boots is not the easiest and pleasantest method of toiling along a burning plateau. My feet began to swell, and walking became a difficulty. All these little annoyances I, however, kept to myself, for fear of being a nuisance to my companions; while, for a time, all discomfort seemed to be forgotten in the interest with which the sight of the "Devil's Pass" filled me.

We had by this time reached this singular link, which connects the two portions of the Inhlobane. Let my readers try and picture to themselves a sudden and abrupt slope, so steep as almost to be called perpendicular, and whose face is so rugged and rocky as almost to defy even the descent of man. If they can condense this into their imagination, they will have formed a true idea of the Devil's Pass. To me it seemed as though nature had chosen this spot on which to perform her gambols: vast masses of disjointed rocks and giant boulders lay piled, one on the top of the other, for some 200 feet down, whence a narrow ledge joined the western portion of the mountain.

Ere attempting the descent, a few of us lay down on the ground to rest ourselves, and await one or two of our party who had fallen behind.

During this interval we were able to examine the precipitous pass down which Colonel Buller had led his 200 mounted men, surrounded by thick masses of attacking Zulus. Bravely had every inch of the way been fought—as bravely disputed; but the loss sustained was terrible, and over sixty horses were left writhing in the agonies of death on that rocky slope, whence escape was impossible for many a poor maimed or broken-legged beast. Their sufferings are long since over, but the bleaching carcasses of many still remain. Some lie jammed in crevices where they fell; the bones of others, dragged hither and thither by despoiling vultures, cover the stones and rocks around. It is a scene of past carnage whose traces will bleach on beneath a burning sun for yet many and many a year.

And on this rugged spot many a gallant act was performed that day, which it is not in my province here to relate. All know that it was here that Colonel Buller gained the Victoria Cross, and that the gallant Piet Uys, in returning to the assistance of his dismounted son, was attacked and assegaied. On the spot whereon he fell a rough stone has been erected bearing his name, which is scratched in rudely-formed letters.

The remainder of our party having arrived

upon the scene, we commenced the descent of the Devil's Pass. It proved even a more arduous task than we, examining it from its summit, had imagined; and it was not without many a slip and a slide, and a tumble or two, that we reached the lower plateau of the Western Inhlobane. Here Major Fraser stopped to make a sketch of the pass, while the rest of us walked slowly on. The torture of thirst had returned with renewed vigour, and for the first time in my life I underwent this experience. When at last we reached the western face of the mountain and commenced the descent, we could distinguish, far away below, the friendly Zulu kraals at which we had breakfasted in the morning, and where doubtless, even at that moment, a refreshing repast was already awaiting us. With longing eyes I once or twice glanced in their direction, and pictured the moment to myself when a soft, cooling drink would banish the torturer thirst; but each time they always appeared farther off than ever, and I gave up looking for them as an action more of pain than pleasure.

But the happy moment came at last when we actually neared the kraals. Unable any longer to bear the agonies of thirst, I pressed ahead of

my companions and met Captain Slade advancing to meet us.

"Well, have you had a pleasant walk?" he asked; "you must have found it terribly hot."

But his question remained unanswered as I cried out—"For God's sake give me something to drink."

"Oh! you are thirsty, are you?" he answered. "What will you have?"

"What would I have!" I felt at that moment as if I could have drunk up an entire river; but I only answered, "Anything, anything; only give me something."

Walkinshaw at this moment came forward with some claret and water. I seized the cup from him, and in another moment my lips were buried in the delicious liquid. Shall I attempt to describe those first moments of exquisite enjoyment? I think not; for the pen would but ill perform its office, and words of greater magnitude and meaning would first of all have to be added to the English language, or indeed any other, before I could do so. But I shall never forget those moments, and the measure of real happiness which they brought.

As soon as Sir Evelyn came up we all lay down on mats under the grateful shade of the kraals

and indulged in lunch. The time so occupied was exceedingly pleasant, and we felt loth to move from the comfortable positions we occupied ; but the sun was already on its downward passage, and its position in the heavens warned us that we must be up and stirring, for Tinta's Kraal lay far beyond those blue-lined hills in the distance, and it was back to Tinta's Kraal and the White Umvolosi that we must return that day.

So the order to saddle up was given ; the horses were promptly driven in and secured ; the luncheon panniers packed up and committed to the faithful Walkinshaw ; cordial farewells were exchanged with the hospitable Zulus ; and within twenty minutes of the order being given we had turned our backs on the Inhlobane, and bearing away from the Zuinge Nek, had our horses' heads well pointed for home.

With the shadows of evening falling quickly and the silver mists rising from the low-lying marshes of the White Umvolosi, we returned to our camp ; at the fireside the cook was busily engaged ; a savoury odour pervaded the atmosphere, and we retired to our different tents to get ready for dinner, with the pleasant consciousness that there was something good in store. Our

expectations were not disappointed : our surmises proved correct, and probably no better dinner or more appreciative guests had ever before assembled together on the banks of the great Umvolosi.

CHAPTER XXIV.

DISAPPOINTED HOPES—A GOOD SHOT—A ZULU AUDIENCE—A
SCENE OF BITTER MEMORY—A RAY OF GOLD—THE SIMPLE
SAVAGE—DRENCHING RAIN—AN UNPLEASANT NIGHT—A
SCENE OF DEATH AND DESOLATION—THE RAPE OF THE
BREAD BAG—THE LAST EFFORT OF EXPIRING ANGER—THE
INHSLAZATYE.

A HEAVY mist, so dense as to obscure any object at a distance of twenty yards, was the order of the following morning; that bright African sun, which had been so busy with our complexions for so long, seemed to have vanished altogether and left in its place the tears of a long farewell. Packing and loading up was rendered exceedingly unpleasant by the dampness of everything, and we found ourselves wishing that Sir Evelyn would rescind the order for departure. But our hopes were disappointed. Booted and spurred, the General quickly made his appearance, and banished thereby any lingering indecision—in which we had been inclined to indulge—in the task of packing up. Matters were hurried for-

ward; waggons were hastily loaded up; and amidst a scene of scurry and some confusion a start was commenced. For a long time anything beyond a snail's pace was out of the question; but towards eight o'clock the sun suddenly burst through the mist and sent it flying before the lance-like thrusts of its darting gleams. Then the mule-waggons broke into a merry trot; we urged our horses into a more genial pace; distances were quickly performed; and a glorious day filled us with buoyant and exulting spirits.

A foolish pow, attracted by our voices and laughter, in an unwary moment poked its head from out some long grass and peered curiously at the motley group, which, doubtless, it regarded as strange visitors. But its curiosity proved fatal on this occasion. A general cry of "Pow!" resounded on all sides, and Sir Evelyn's voice was heard calling for his rifle. This Walkinshaw had already unslung from his shoulder, and the General, dismounting, cautiously approached the bird until a distance of only eighty yards or so intervened between it and himself; then he bent his knee and brought his rifle to his shoulder, the bird all the while continuing to gaze at him in astonishment. We held our breath and awaited the report, which came sooner than we expected.

It was greeted with a shout of triumph as the bird was seen to fall. Galloping forward, we clustered round the successful sportsman and his game; it was a noble bird, and immensely heavy, and roast pow was spoken of in anticipation by the greedy throng. The bullet had cut through its windpipe, causing instant death; and the shot was pronounced a decidedly good one—as it undoubtedly was.

On the banks of a little murmuring rivulet we halted for breakfast; and while it was preparing several ardent sportsmen, fired by the General's success, started off with guns and rifles in search of game. There was not a bird that flew in South Africa that they were not going to stalk, and lay low, and the bag in prospect was enormous. They were absent some time, and returned to indulge in a cold breakfast; and we, unwilling to appear curious, forebore for a time to question them as to their success. We put their silence down to modesty, and pictured to ourselves the large heap of game which, as the moments flew by, we expected to hear them allude to and ask for a waggon to fetch; but, as time passed away, our curiosity and impatience got the better of us, and, as their modesty seemed prolonged to a verge of inconsistency, one or two of us ventured to suggest

that an empty waggon should be despatched to bring home the spoil. "The spoil! what spoil?" inquired those whom up till now we had been glorifying with inappropriate attributes.

"Why, the game you have shot, to be sure," we replied; "to judge, by the numerous reports, there must be a tidy heap piled up somewhere."

They did not answer; but one or two sighs brought the patent truth more forcibly and quickly to our understanding.

"It can't be that you've killed nothing?" I exclaimed; feeling at the same time that this was, alas! but too true a fact.

"No; we got nothing," was the reply, reluctantly extorted, and which was greeted with a shout of derision and not a little disappointment.

They bore our chaff quietly enough, though we did not spare them at the time. Probably an old lesson sank deep into their hearts and became rooted there in the proverbial advice of "Count not your chickens before they are hatched."

At breakfast several Zulus appeared on the scene. They hailed from a village of kraals hard by; and one, a young man, who seemed to be the most intelligent of the party, was questioned in conversation as to the appreciation he felt for Sir Garnet Wolseley's settlement of the country.

Judging by his replies, he did not entertain a very high opinion of it,—the only blessing which he seemed to derive therefrom being the possession of a plurality of wives. Turning to Mr. Rudolf,—who, I forgot to mention, accompanied Sir Evelyn in the capacity of interpreter to the expedition,—I asked him to inquire of the young Zulu whether he would be glad or sorry were he to hear that Cetshwayo was to be restored; but the question was disallowed, and his sentiments were therefore unrecorded. This little incident, however, strengthened my determination not to leave Zululand until, by every available means, I had satisfied myself as to the wishes of its people in this matter; and my subsequent efforts in that direction left no doubt in my mind that, with very few exceptions, the great body of this gallant nation is as loyal and devoted as ever to their captive monarch; that their ever-recurring prayer and cry is for his freedom; and that, while hope remains, they are ever expecting and longing for his return.

Our Zulu audience over, the journey was resumed, and we arrived on the banks of the Insangeni River just in time to catch sight of the last waggon of the column disappearing over a distant incline. A halt being called, the question

was debated whether we should ride on and rejoin the column, or, pitching our camp on the Insangeni bank, retrace our steps a short way, and then branch off for the Ityotyotsi on a visit to the spot where the Prince Imperial fell. The ayes being unanimous in support of the latter plan, the waggons were drawn up into line; a site for the tents was selected; and the horses we had been riding were unsaddled and turned loose to graze, being replaced by fresh ones. In less than a quarter of an hour we were mounted once more; and, turning our backs on the departing column, we recrossed the Insangeni,—almost immediately bearing away from the waggon-track on to the broad and undefined Veldt; and, leaving the Inyanyêni Hill—a remarkable and distinct feature which arose in the middle of a great plain on our right—our horses' heads were fairly pointed for the Ityotyotsi.

Heavy clouds now commenced to mass their forces together, and before long the sky was completely covered with their array. A misty drizzle, which gradually increased to small rain, began to fall, and it was easy to see that we were in for a wetting. We, however, treated the advent of the rain with becoming contempt,—this contempt being especially noticeable in those who had come provided with Macintoshes. I was not

one of this number, not being in possession of so useful an article, though I am bound to say that it was not from want of offers or pressing invitations to appropriate one from out the collection; yet, nevertheless, I proved for a time impervious to the drizzle,—which fact was attributed to my Scotch origin.

Proceeding at a smart canter, we soon made mince-meat of the ten miles before us, and at twelve o'clock we were close on the Ityqtyotsi. A gradually inclining plain now stretched away in front of us; and at its base, and between a quarter and half mile distant from where we were riding, we could perceive the white marble cross erected on the spot where the Prince fell. It was from thence and up this gentle incline that Lieutenant Carey headed that helter-skelter, panic-stricken, and *sauve qui peut* flight. How utter that pell-mell flight must have been becomes evident to the visitor who for the first time stands upon this scene of bitter memory to England. Had the panic-stricken creatures—I will not call them men—who fled that day but turned in their saddles, they could not have failed to see the gallant boy surrounded—alone and forsaken—defending his life against unequal odds. Did any of those terror-stricken flyers so turn, they must have perceived the scene de-

scribed, and were therefore cowards not to draw rein and return to his assistance ; did they on the other hand continue their flight without looking round, I still assert them cowards ; for who, mounted—in the confident superiority of safety against an unmounted foe—would not glance round at any rate to give that foe a parting look, unless their hearts were filled with an insane terror ? Truly, it seems almost doubtful as to whether they are to be most blamed, or most pitied with a contemptuous pity ; but in recording the feelings which rushed to my mind with a hot glow as I looked across that gently-rising plain whose face has been scarred for ever by this cruel deed, the words rose involuntarily to my lips, and in them the pain and sorrow of the moment were expressed : “ Oh ! better, far better, to have died a hundred times—to be bleaching there even at this moment—than to live on and carry for ever that hateful stain.”

Slowly and sadly we rode across the intervening space which separated us from the Memorial Cross. Few there were present who had not known the young Prince, and even those might almost have been said to know him by the stainless reputation, the fair bright fame, which had followed him throughout an all too brief

Existence, and now burnt its pure bright flame upon the grave. Even as we approached the cross a break in the clouds let forth a few bright rays from the hidden sun ; and they, as though allured to that spot, hallowed by the memory of courage and gallantry, seemed to play about the marble, and caress that ground sacred to the memory of him who thereon had fallen. As we approached, several Zulus rose from the ground close to the cross, where they had been seated. They were recognised as the inhabitants of a village of kraals hard by, and two of them proved to belong to that party who had killed the Prince. By them his memory is recalled with veneration and regret ; to use their own words, " the courageous young lion with whom they fought is not, and never will be, forgotten ;" for the noble savage can appreciate courage as well as, ay and better than, the white man of civilisation, and these men in their description of past events knew well how to evince admiration and respect for the gallant life that struggled so valiantly that day,—even as, in the same breath, they condemned with scorn and contempt the cowards who fled and deserted it.

•Beneath the Memorial Cross,—the gift of Queen Victoria,—lay also the faded wreath sent likewise by her Majesty. Close to it a little

casket from the Prince and Princess of Wales rested on the mound; while wreaths from other donors were there in profusion. The enclosure was neatly kept by the Zulus already mentioned: flowers, ferns, and young trees were flourishing around, and garlands of ivy, creeping along the wall which formed the enclosure, produced a very pretty effect.

Not fifty yards away could be distinguished the mealie garden in which the surprise took place; while behind it flowed the river Tombokala,—along whose bed the Zulus had crept silently and unobserved. Thither we repaired to inspect the position,—one, alas! all too well adapted to court surprise,—a situation of extreme peril whereon to off-saddle in an enemy's country. From the mealie garden we rode across the Tombokala and up to the village of kraals already mentioned, where a small luncheon-basket which we had brought with us was unpacked, and its contents attacked. The natives clustered round us, and we kept them in a state of exceeding merriment. At first they were a little puzzled as to who and what I was. The year before they had seen the Empress and Lady Wood; but, recalling their faces, they were able to understand that I was neither of them. A satisfactory

explanation was, however, given them by Mr. Rudolf, who assured them that I was a great personage,—at which their demeanour became more marked and respectful, and they treated me with a good deal of deference. Over Captain Slade's watch they waxed exceeding curious. Pressing his thumb on the spring, he at the same time blew upon the silver face of the watch, which at once flew open; he then removed his thumb from the spring, and, closing the face, held it out to a powerful Zulu to be blown upon by him. At first the man blew gently; but the face remaining closed, he repeated the experiment,—only harder. In vain! the face would not fly open. One by one the whole group of men and women essayed, by blowing upon the watch, to make it open; but their attempts all proved equally abortive. At last Captain Slade, replacing his thumb on the spring, held out the watch towards a little child. A murmur of derision ran through the group; if *their* efforts had failed, how would those of a tiny child succeed? But the murmur turned to exclamations of wonder as the face of the watch was seen to fly open; and henceforth that child would have been revered as a wizard amongst them, had not the fraud been duly explained. A year

previous,—and during the visit of the Empress Eugenie to the Ityotyotsi,—Captain Slade had presented the old chief of this kraal with a small hand looking-glass, by which the man set great store. Captain Slade expressing a wish to have a look at it again, the chief regretted his inability to grant the request, inasmuch as he had lent it to one of his sons, who had gone a-courting a Zulu lassie over the water. It was considered that the looking-glass would act as a powerful magnet towards attracting the affections of the young lady in question,—a young man, the possessor of a looking-glass, being no mean *parti*, nor one to be disdained. Evidently thinking that Captain Slade attached as much importance to the article as he did himself, the old chief set himself vigorously to assure the donor that it was carefully wrapped up in a skin hide, and was guarded with the utmost tenderness and solicitude by his son. We were therefore, as became the occasion, duly impressed as to the safety of this little sixpenny toy.

The remainder of our visit to the kraals was spent in endeavouring to induce some of the Zulu intombes, or girls, to mount into my saddle. The proposal was greeted with shrieks of laughter; but no bribes,* threats, or promises

could prevail upon them to do so. As I mounted, exclamations of wonder broke from them, which became considerably heightened as, bidding them all adieu, we prepared to take our departure.

Recrossing the Tombokala, and skirting the mealie garden and enclosure around the Memorial Cross, we got over the donga, which ran down from the latter spot, at a lower point than before. Once more the rain, which had held up during our visit, began to fall, and we pressed homewards at no mean pace. On reaching the Insangeni, it came down in torrents, and we hastened to take refuge in the mess tent; while the servants unsaddled and blanketed the horses, and tethered them to their respective lines. All that evening it poured, and all through the night likewise,—a chill, cold, drenching rain which penetrated through canvas and everything. Our tents were in a sop, and the quagmire around them terrible. That round my tent was especially bad, being caused by several wretched oxen who had been left behind by the column to die, and who, by instinct, as it were, had selected the very tent against which to seek refuge, from which they knew they would not be driven. One poor beast had lain down at the entrance and

established his head inside ; I fed him with oats and mealies, which he seemed to appreciate, but my efforts to restore him were unavailing, as, before we left the Insangeni, he, as well as his companions in misfortune, had passed to a better world. To be surrounded in one's tent by dead beasts is by no means pleasant. I was destined, however, in our next encampment to become comparatively accustomed to such scenes, and to regard them, if not with indifference, at least with less repugnance.

The morning brought no break in the skies,—still the same merciless, pitiless, drenching rain. Horses, mules, and men were all more or less soaked and miserable ; and there was no possibility of moving. We obtained tidings of the column, which we learnt was encamped some six or seven miles distant, likewise unable to proceed ; and this forced inactivity was exceedingly trying. The day was spent in the mess tent, where, by writing and other occupations, we managed to while away the time. The meal hours became important items in the day's proceedings ; and when bed-time came none of us were sorry. As far as regarded myself, sleep was an exile. I had lain down on the outside of my rugs, making no attempt to undress. The top-boots that I

wore were soaked through; another pair I possessed not, and of trees I had none; to have taken them off would have meant the impossibility of ever getting them on again, so that there was no alternative but to stick to them and ignore the consequences. These, however, quickly made themselves felt; a deathly, freezing cold seemed to have taken possession of the atmosphere; my feet became like blocks of ice; the whole of my body chilled; and the night so spent was the reverse of pleasant.

On coming outside next morning we found the hills all round covered with snow; rain was still steadily descending, and the clouds were darkly ominous. At breakfast Sir Evelyn decided to strike camp and proceed if it did not clear up by twelve o'clock; and this decision was hailed with satisfaction, for we were weary of our present quarters. The morning meal over, we superintended the departure of Mr. Osborne, the British Resident of Zululand, and his son, who had joined us in camp the day before. They were hurrying forward to the Inhlazaty in advance of the troops, in order to arrange matters for the proposed meeting. At twelve o'clock, there being no signs of a break in the sky, the General gave the order to strike camp. By one

o'clock our little convoy was under weigh; but after proceeding for about a mile, the broad flooded expanse of the Umvolosi River brought it to a standstill. First of all the horses crossed, and as we did so we congratulated ourselves on having come just in time: the river was rapidly rising, and in another two hours would have been quite impassable. As it was, the mules had to swim in several places; happily for them and the waggons, this was only for very short distances; but even on getting across the greatest difficulty was experienced in getting the waggons up the inclining track, which rose in a short but steep hill from the water's edge, and which had become so slippery that the mules found it almost impossible to keep their footing. However, patience and perseverance carried the day and the passage was safely effected; we proceeded on our way, and in about an hour's time joined the column, which was encamped beneath a slippery and forbidding-looking hill. General Wood deciding to pursue his journey for another five or six miles, we separated from the party and remained with the troops, as I was anxious to obtain a change of things from our waggon and get into a more comfortable guise; but I speedily found my attempt of this sort ineffectual, for our tent,

pitched on the wet ground, soon became a Slough of Despond within. A hundred oxen had died the previous night, and this number was trebled by the following morning. In every direction dead and dying animals lay scattered over the plain, and the sight was exceedingly dreary and desolate. Another day of rain found the column still a prisoner; but this inactivity being dreadful to me, we decided to inspan and proceed forward to rejoin the Generals. Colonel Luck, taking advantage of a short interval of fine weather, got a good many of the waggons to the top of the hill, and made preparations to start on the following morning, rain or no rain. As for ourselves, we reached the two Generals' encampment late in the afternoon, where, pitching our tents close to Sir Evelyn's, we walked across to those of General Buller to dine. Next morning the column rejoined us, and having outspanned for a couple of hours, prepared to go forward once more, pitching its final camp within eight or ten miles of the Inhslazatye,—the road thence being too rugged to permit of a farther advance being made. Sir Evelyn, however, proceeded with his mule waggons to the place of meeting, General Buller remaining with the troops, with whom for that night we likewise halted.

That night a span of the General's mules got loose, and, wandering about in search of plunder, pitched upon my tent whereon to commence their attacks. A loose mule is the most troublesome night visitor imaginable. Woe to the bag of corn, bread, or eatables of any sort on which he can lay his snout; it will either be torn to pieces, or the contents demolished, or carried bodily away to be dissected and digested at leisure. Mules had been my bugbear through the whole of my camp life in South Africa. A hundred of these animals might be trampling, fighting, and stealing around the tents for all the servants ever heard of them. Placidly on through the *mêlée* they would snore, undisturbed and unawakened. Beside me, at night, and close to hand, lay always a thick stick; and sometimes, infuriated almost to madness, I would rush from my tent and lay about me right and left. Away would scamper these night robbers; but no sooner had I crept into my blanket again, and was beginning to get warm once more, than the shuffling snorting sound outside informed me that my enemies had returned. On the night in question, the moonlight suddenly streaming into the tent awoke me from a heavy slumber. I started up, when—oh! horror, could I believe my eyes?—a mule was

half-way into the tent, calmly and quietly proceeding to lay hold of the bread bag, which, for safety, as I thought, I had placed within the tent. To spring up was the matter of a moment; but my stick had been mislaid. I, however, snatched up a huge knobkerrie, and aimed a blow at the intruder. He cleverly parried the stroke, then with an effrontery unparalleled, he seized the bag between his teeth and made off. Away in hot pursuit went I, forgetting boots and stockings in my hurry, but taking the precaution to slip on an ulster as I ran. Away in front of me scudded ten mules, the delinquent with the bag in his mouth leading in triumph. Away went they; but aided by the wings of fury and vengeance, I followed swiftly in their wake. Never while I had breath left in me, I vowed, should those mules be permitted to indulge in their ill-gotten gains. "Who goes there?" comes from the voice of an astonished sentry; and in a panting voice I reply, while still pressing on, "Friend." He did not attempt to question further, and I left him to his thoughts, for the mules were still in front of me. Suddenly, he who bore the bag stumbled and fell; with an exclamation of delight, I flew to its rescue, and, before he could rise, had dealt him a blow which very nearly prevented him from ever

rising again. When he did, however, I drove him and his companions quite a quarter of a mile into the open Veldt, and then prepared to return in triumph with my bread bag. The rough ground had not been sparing to my feet, which felt very tender and painful now that my vanishing anger permitted my mind to wander to such trifles. Back to my tent I limped, and was preparing to enter, when a shuffling noise at no great distance away made me look round. A dark, compact mass was moving towards me. "What can it be," said I to myself, "not more mules I hope?" But even as the words were uttered, my worst fears became realised; the black mass of a surety consisted of mules, and, what is more, they proved to be the very ones I had fervently hoped and imagined to be effectually driven off.

Peace being out of the question as long as they remained at large, I managed with an infinity of trouble to get my black driver and foreloucher to arise; and, having seen them well on their way towards the General's camp with the mules in front of them, I re-entered my tent. It was decidedly provoking to hear a sleepy voice coming out of the darkest corner of the tent, where my husband lay, asking "What was the matter?"

• “It is my belief that if every Zulu in Zululand were in this tent all assegaing you at once, you would sleep through it all,” answered I, rather peevishly, forgetting the inconsistency of the speech with common reason. Certainly, the tent would have been a miraculous one to have held several hundred thousand men; while the unfortunate victim of so many assegaies would undoubtedly have slept on with a vengeance! The inconsistent speech being, however, a remnant of that anger which the invading mules had aroused, must be excused by the reader; and, in palliation, I may remark that the outburst in question was its final effort.

Next morning, in a dense mist, we started on an unknown track to rejoin Sir Evelyn. The marks left by his waggons were our only guide, so that we took great pains not to lose sight of them by any chance. The first part of the way was exceedingly rough travelling; but at length reaching smother ground, our road became more manageable. A couple of hours’ ride brought us to our destination, as, threading some long, wet, reedy grass, the tents loomed through the mist. We found Captain Slade shaving, and in the distance some one was performing a ditty with evident satisfaction to himself; for no sooner was

it ended than it was struck up again with renewed relish. It was not very musical. In half an hour we were all assembled at breakfast, discussing the probability of the mist clearing off. The great meeting of chiefs had been fixed for this date ; but as yet no sign of any could be seen, and the General therefore postponed it to the morrow. About twelve o'clock the mist began to lift its silver veil from off the hills and valleys of Zululand ; and then, as if by magic, a scene totally different to that around the lower camp became disclosed. How shall I describe it ? Far below stretched a valley, green as emerald, in which were grazing some small herds of tiny Zulu cattle ; and all around it, rising higher and higher, waving hills stretched away in interminable ranges, until the distant horizon received and nursed them in its golden-tinted folds. On the soft flower-carpeted slopes innumerable kraals arose ; and with the outburst of the sun, their inhabitants could be distinguished coming forth to greet their morning god's first rays. But the most striking feature in the whole of that vast panorama was the giant massive form that rose not a quarter of a mile away from the General's tents. Bathed in a flood of trembling golden mist, I first beheld it ; swept with the glowing tints of opal, it ap-

peared one enormous living gem. I had never seen it before; but it needed no words to tell me that, in that beautiful structure of Nature's own forming, I saw before me the Evergreen Mountain,—the Inhslazatye itself.

With the disappearance of the mist, crowds of natives began to put in an appearance, and the day was spent mixing with the crowd, bartering, buying of them, and, by the aid of interpreters, entering into conversation with them. Many a wholesome truth I learnt that day from the lips of chiefs, indunas, and common men. From those lips the English method of viewing a Zulu received in my mind its greatest shock. It seemed strange to hear these men's voices deploring the loss of a dearly-loved king, longing for his return, and living on in the sweetness of such a hope. Where was the fear, the hate, and the terror for this tyrant, this despotic savage, this man-slaying machine of Sir Bartle Frere's, which we in England had been taught and encouraged to believe existed? Where, indeed? The question may indeed be asked, and the lie we have been told hurled back in the teeth of its authors. Never was loyalty so apparent,—never was love so inextinguishable as that which exists in the Zulu nation for its unjustly

invaded, unjustly treated, maligned, and captive king.

I will not here attempt to describe the effects of sunset that evening on the stately Inhs lazatye. To attempt to do so would be but to court failure; let me, however, say this much, that, in its infinite beauty,—unlike anything of the sort I had ever seen before in far-extended wanderings,—it produced in my mind a pleasure which a great king would once have given all his treasures to possess—a new sensation.

CHAPTER XXV.

THE INHSLAZATYE MEETING—GOD SAVE THE QUEEN—PROCEEDINGS COMMENCED—THE TRUTH ABOUT ZULULAND—HELD IN BONDAGE—SEPARATION—A PEEP AT JOHN DUNN'S HAREM—A MID-DAY OFF-SADDLE—MOURNFUL MEMORIES—LAST DAY WITH THE TROOPS.

BRIGHT and clear broke the morning which heralded in the day of the great Inhslazatye meeting. At an early hour small bands of far-travelled Zulus might have been seen making their way over hill and dale towards the little camp, whose position was rendered distinguishable by the great Union Jack which waved on a very high pole just in front of General Wood's tent. By nine o'clock a goodly throng had assembled; but the number was much smaller than we had expected. The truth of the matter was, as we afterwards learnt, that the terrible weather of the past few days having rendered travelling impossible, many of the Zulus, hastening to the meeting, were at that time still far off; and

they did not arrive upon the spot until several days after it was all over.

Breakfast finished, Sir Evelyn departed to his tent to array himself in full pontificals, and shortly after returned so covered with medals as to be almost indistinguishable. The next General to light upon the scene was General Buller, who, with Captain Browne, his aide-de-camp, was very soberly dressed; and then from their tents came Captain Slade, Major Fraser, and Mr. Hamilton, all looking very smart indeed. Soon the distant strains of music, wafted across the Zulu hills, struck upon our ears, and gave us warning of the approach of the troops. A far off glitter bespoke their whereabouts as they came forward at a smart pace along a high straight ridge to the left of the camp. Then all became bustle and activity; horses were ordered up; every one quickly mounted and followed General Buller at a gallop as he advanced to meet the troops. It was a stirring scene,—the sun lighting up the uniforms of the military, and burnishing the coats of the horses until they shone and shone again in the reflection of their own brilliancy, while the gay music from the band of the Inniskillings raised the spirits of every one, horses included, the proud frettings of the latter tending to show them off to much advantage.

A long line of about 200 mounted Basutos were drawn up to receive the squadrons as they marched in; and the camp reached, the National Anthem was at once struck up. Far and wide through the bright fresh air these strains of loyalty and devotion were wafted; over the valleys and mountains of Zululand they wandered; against the massive rocks of the Inhlazatye they struck, and echoed and re-echoed again and again in the ears of their listeners. Thousands of miles away from the land of his birth, was there an Englishman present to whom these strains did not bring back the memory of the old country so far away; and was there a heart in all that throng that did not warm with loyalty and devotion to the sovereign in whose honour those strains were emitted? I think not.

Mounting his horse, Sir Evelyn, attended by Captain Slade, Major Fraser, and Mr. Hamilton, came forward to meet us; then turning, we all rode together towards the spot where a dense black horse-shoe of human beings betokened the place of meeting. In the centre of the half circle, squatting on mats, were five of the reigning chiefs and several representatives of others who were unable to attend; while on a chair close to them was seated John Dunn. On either side

of the chiefs two deep lines of indunas and great men were clustered together; and behind these again was a long row of petty chiefs and men of rank and importance. Around these ran a horse-shoe circle, in lines ten or twelve deep, of Zulus, who were all arranged in complete order and at a respectful distance from their superiors. The names of the chiefs present, in addition to John Dunn, were Zibebu, Umgojana, Siwunguza, Hlubi, and Ntshingwayo; those represented by indunas being Seketwayo, Oham, and Faku; while Mgitswa, Somkele, Mlandela, and Mfanawendhlela were not represented. Amongst the great personages present, those most prominently distinguishable were the Prince Dinuzulu, the only son and heir-apparent of Cetshwayo; Mnyamana, the late Prime Minister of Zululand; Ziwetu, Ndabuko, and Mtonga, brothers of Cetshwayo. There also were the great chiefs Dabulumanzi, Somhlolo Umsingulu of Umquettas country, the chiefs Umquandi, Simoyi, and many others. Opposite the chiefs were placed a row of chairs and benches, Sir Evelyn occupying the centre, having on his right Mr. Osborne, the British Resident of Zululand, and two interpreters, —one being Mr. Rudolf; while on his left I was seated. Behind us stood the aides-de-camp,

· military and private secretaries, and a large group of officers and men—General Buller being seated on my left. Behind us the troops were drawn up in line ; and as the three squadrons simultaneously unsheathed their swords, there was a momentary movement of panic amongst the horse-shoe circle, which, however, quickly subsided. Proceedings were commenced by the reading of a long address by Major Fraser, who spoke in a loud and distinct voice, his words being interpreted by Mr. Osborne's interpreter. It contained a long explanation of our past proceedings in, and our policy with regard to, the Transvaal, which, I am bound to admit, was not very attentively listened to by any of the chiefs with the exception of Zibebu, who got up a show of interest, which before long, however, evaporated in a yawn.

This explanation finished, Major Fraser next commenced another address, which was graphically translated by Mr. Rudolph. It consisted of a series of suggestions made to the chiefs,—which they were at liberty to adopt or not as they pleased,—and related chiefly to taxation, border police guards, industrial schools, and matters of equal non-importance, and uninteresting to those to whom they were proposed. Several of them were adopted by the kinglets ; but I could

not see any great eagerness evinced to do so; while, as to sub-residents and the establishment of industrial schools, the idea was unanimously rejected by all,—with the exception of Zibebu, who agreed to the first of the two, provided he was allowed to select his own sub-resident in the person of a ruffianly-looking white man who went by the name of Johan Colenbrander. This Zibebu is one of the few chiefs who do not advocate the king's restoration. Aided by Johan Colenbrander, and regardless of the Resident's feeble remonstrances, he subjects by force the brothers and relatives of Cetshwayo to a system of pillage and spoliation, taking from them their cattle and possessions, because they still cling to the memory of the captive monarch in his exile.

The propositions at an end, several cases of dispute were heard and decided by Sir Evelyn, the account of which I here give from the mouth of Mfutshane, an induna, who was present at the meeting, and which may prove interesting as coming from Zulu lips.

At the meeting the white chiefs first spoke of the affairs of the Basutos and of the Boers. Then they said, "And you, people of Zululand, we say must pay [money] a tax to the thirteen appointed chiefs, and the chiefs must divide the money and send some of it to the Resident, and also pay policemen with it,—the chiefs away from the border giving it to those near

the border,—who shall look out for evil-doers between the Boers and the Zulus, that it may be clearly seen in future whether it is a Zulu or a Boer who is the aggressor. And roads must be made”—the white chiefs did not point out where the roads were to be made—“and when a man leaves the territory of one chief, and goes to that of another, he shall pay money.”

“Do you wish for white advisers (*abameleli*) to live with you and help you?”

But the assembly was silent, excepting only Zibebu, who suggested Johan Colenbrander for his whiteman. The white chiefs rejected him at first, and then said, “Well, we will see about it,” and then agreed to him for the present, saying, “It does not matter, we will see about it again afterwards.”

Then Mgojana answered the question of the white chiefs, saying, “As for me, Sirs, my land has been eaten up between Zibebu and Hamu,—I have no country left. So what should I want with an ‘Adviser,’ since I am pinched in between these two? Am I to be eaten up like this, when the white chiefs had allotted to me a large district?”

And Siwunguza answered, “I have no district, Sirs, since much of the land belonging to my tribe is across the Umhlatuze and is given to John Dunn.”

And Dilikana said, “O Zulus! is it possible that you are wasting the time thus over your separate affairs? Why do you not speak for the King’s family? Have they offended you in any way that you do not speak for them in their distress? And your King? I thought that your intention in coming here was to pray for him? What wrong has he ever done?”

Then said the white chiefs, “You, Maduna, Ziweddu, and Dinuzulu, we give you to John Dunn. As for your cattle, if Zibebu has eaten up thirty, he shall give you back ten, or if forty, he shall give you twenty, and keep twenty in any case. But this is only on condition that you go to John Dunn; if you do not go to live under John Dunn, Zibebu shall return to you none.” They asked leave to answer, but the white

chiefs refused, saying, "What should you answer? We turn you out, Maduna, and Dinuzulu, and Ziwedu, because you are always saying you want the bone of that scoundrel (*ishinga*) whom we have done away with. You are always saying that you are going to [pray] the authorities about that. We forbid you that road. What business have you there?" They said, "That is just the point on which we wish to speak." But the white chiefs forbade it, and they were allowed no reply. And the white chiefs said, "As for you Mnyamana, you have no voice here [cannot speak here]. You refused a chieftainship; we then told you to go to Hamu; you refused that also. Now we say that of your cattle, which Hamu has eaten up, he shall give you back 700, and he shall keep 600." And when Mnyamana asked leave to reply, it was said, "We don't wish you to answer; we are laying down the law to you; how should you answer [object]?" And this is just what was said to Maduna and to Ziwedu, "We will not have you answer."

These judgments having been given, the General arose; the National Anthem once more struck up; the chiefs and people were told to salute; and the meeting was at an end. The troops formed up and marched away, and the slopes of the Inhlazatye re-echoed for the last time with a triumphal march which seemed to exult in a victory whose gain could produce no good result. Amidst that native crowd murmurs of discontent waxed loud. Was it for this that many had come long and weary distances? was it for this that absent chiefs had sent representatives, and the present crowd assembled? Does

England wish or care to know the truth? because, if so, in the name of the Zulu nation and the majority of their chiefs, I will answer *No*. What to them were the propositions advanced? what did *they* care about industrial schools, border police, sub-residents, and such like? For the purpose of laying before Lukuni (Sir Evelyn Wood) the present discontent of Zululand,—for the purpose of showing the utter failure of Sir Garnet Wolseley's settlement of the country,—and for the purpose of praying for the return and restoration of their unforgotten captive king, under whose rule they were a prosperous nation in past days,—these Zulus had assembled together. But speaking was prohibited; and though an attempt was made by Mnyamana, who stood up during the hearing of the disputes and reminded the people of the purpose for which they had come together, his words were abruptly stopped, and the order not to speak but to listen was reiterated.

So ended the great Inhlazatyé meeting, one which accomplished no end but to disappoint many a loyal and hopeful heart, which, coming filled with the latter, returned to its home angry and discontented. Had the nation been called together for the purpose of receiving back its

king, a sight unparalleled would have been witnessed. From every part and corner of Zululand dense crowds would have flocked, and the hilly slopes around would have been covered with Zulus; but the right which every sense of justice demands we should restore to the country—the act which every sense of mercy prompts—is left unrestored and undone. Over the woes of another country,¹—equally the result of false appropriation and injustice on the part of England,—this nation is arguing and attempting legislation; and in the importance of the one to English interests, those of a smaller but no less suffering country are forgotten, and will remain forgotten until, goaded to madness, the people arise to assert their rights and cast off their toils,—and this will be termed rebellion.

As the afternoon of the 31st of August wore away, the hour of separation approached. On the morrow, at an early hour, Sir Evelyn, accompanied by Captain Slade, Major Fraser, and Mr. Hamilton, and attended by Mr. Rudolf and Walkinshaw, had arranged his departure for Swaziland, crossing the Lebombo Mountains to Delagoa Bay, whence a gunboat would convey him to Durban. We, remaining behind, had

¹ Ireland.

planned with General Buller an expedition to Ulundi; and as we purposed accomplishing the visit by going and returning in one day, an early start was also deemed necessary. So, at five o'clock next morning, we arose in a dense mist, and, groping about in the darkness, managed to get the horses saddled. At half-past five, Sir Evelyn and those accompanying him bade us good-bye, and started off on their journey; we, following their example, proceeded in an opposite direction. Our party was a large one, swelled by the advent of several officers from the camp below,—amongst whom was my cousin. At the very outset, one of our number,—Mr. Rupert Leigh of the 15th Hussars,—lagging behind, got separated and lost in the mist, and it was not until late that evening that he managed to find his way back to his own camp, after a most wearying and dispiriting day spent without food.

Passing beneath the lofty Inshlazatye, whose evergreen heights were hidden from view, we followed the indistinct tracks of an overgrown road, which, General Buller informed us, had been made during the Zulu War. As, however, this part of the country was unknown to him, and the Basuto who accompanied us as interpreter

was quite as little acquainted with it as the General, the prospect of a straight ride to Ulundi appeared shadowy and doubtful in the extreme. The thick mist was also a terrible drawback, not a landmark of any kind being visible; and it was not until we had been several hours on the way that the sun began to assert its power, and the heavy curtain was lifted. As the dense atmosphere rolled away in massive clouds, a scene of wild and rugged beauty was unfolded; verily one might have been riding through the wildest part of the Scottish Highlands, whose stately grandeur was recalled by these impressive scenes.

Suddenly the road branched off into two distinct paths,—one leading to the right, the other to the left. We chose the former, which eventually turned out to be the wrong one, and took us a good deal out of our way. As, however, it wound through some lovely scenery, we did not grudge the extra distance; though, I daresay, our horses, if they had been consulted, would not have agreed with us. A large winding rocky river, whose banks were rich in vegetation, suddenly obstructed our path, and was the first intimation to us that we were off the right track. Crossing it we came upon some waggon's out-

spanned, and a few tents pitched close by. These turned out to be the property of the chief John Dunn, whose arrival was hourly expected; and, as our interpreter inquired the way to Ulundi, from the folds of one of the tents peered two young Zulu girls, between the ages of sixteen and seventeen, who, we were informed, were the latest additions to that chief's harem. A native was given us to show us the way, and he led us to a deep ford higher up the river, which proved to be our old friend the White Umvolosi. This native escorted us most unwillingly, inasmuch as his companions were at that moment engaged in devouring some nasty-looking half-cooked meat, which composed their breakfast, and he was greatly alarmed lest on his return he would find his portion gone. The General, however, consoled and made him happy in the possession of a shilling; and, the ford reached, he was permitted to retrace his steps, which he did with the greatest alacrity. By a small village of kraals, which we soon after reached, we halted and off-saddled for half an hour; after which, pressing a Zulu into our service as guide, we started again, proceeding in single file along a narrow Kaffir path, which we could distinguish winding upwards to a great height, and which our guide,

on quitting us, informed us we must faithfully adhere to.

Obedying his directions, we eventually found ourselves overlooking a magnificent scene, which embraced far-stretching valleys and hills; while a glimpse of the White Umvolosi, dashing and foaming along in its rocky bed several miles below, put a finishing touch to this gorgeous panorama. High above us towered frowning crags and perpendicular masses of rocks crowned by a perfect garden of vegetation; while, as we ascended higher, the shrubs and brushwood assumed such luxuriant growth, that it was with the greatest difficulty we forced our horses along. At length, after a great deal of rough climbing, the summit we had been so long bent on attaining was reached, and the somewhat tropical country we had been riding through was replaced by vast waving plains, from the midst of which, in the far distance, could be distinguished the battle-field of Ulundi. Here, again, the winding course of the Umvolosi greeted us, and on its banks we off-saddled, for the second time that day, to feed the horses and refresh ourselves. The heat was overpowering, and the cool transparent waters of the beautiful river were tantalizing beyond description. Under a shady tree, close to its limpid

stream, I ensconced myself to watch our four horses dispose of their oats and mealies; and, lulled by the pleasant murmur of the water gurgling over the stones, I should speedily have fallen asleep had not the voice of General Buller suddenly awakened me to the reality of the moment by inviting me to join in an attack on some bread, potted meat, and hot coffee which he had been busy preparing. At this place an hour's law only was given, at the expiration of which the journey was renewed. Entering upon the battlefield, we galloped across the plain over which the Lancers charged, and speedily arrived upon the ruins of the great Nodwengu Kraal. Of this not a vestige remained beyond a huge dark circle, showing where the immense town had once stood; while, all over the wide plain, dark rings,—similar to that of Nodwengu,—displayed the spots whereon vast masses of Cetshwayo's people had once lived. In many places large heaps of skeletons told a silent tale of the bravery of a vanquished nation; how for king and country they had hotly disputed possession with the invaders of their own loved capital; and how, rallying together, they had scorned to ask for quarter,—dying as they fell in that wholesale butchery for which we gave ourselves so much glory. Far

and wide the plain was dotted with skeletons; every bush seemed to shelter the remains of some poor wretch who had crawled beneath it to die; every snug nook and cranny, every grass-grown valley or donga, bore upon its face the ghastly grinning impress of death; while around Ulundi the traces of a great struggle still remained.

Where the town itself had stood, masses of shrubs and trees of rapid growth obscured every vestige of the great capital of Cetshwayo so completely that for a long time General Buller was at a loss to discover the place at all, and it was only by the merest chance that the spot was identified.

The battlefield of Ulundi was, at the time of our visit, shooting forth its young verdant coat; and the emerald tints on the hills by which it is surrounded displayed the first budding of early spring in its newest and freshest guise.

To one who, like myself, realised the horrible injustice of the Zulu War, this visit brought nothing but sad thoughts and mournful memories; the scene was one of a great wreck,—and that wreck, as it was bit by bit disclosed, loaded the mind with shame and sorrow for the deed that had been so wantonly committed. Even as I write this I see it all again,—the verdant basin, the green

emerald hills, the golden sun lighting up the trophies of nature's abundance ; and then, through the dancing gleams of sunlight, I see the vast black circles which show where ruin reigns, and the ghastly grinning emblems of death mocking, as it were, at mercy, justice, and fair-play.

A long ride before us, and the afternoon wearing away, warned us that it was time to think of returning. Full forty miles had we ridden, and an equal distance still separated us from the camp where the troops were quartered. Striking across the broad plain, we pointed our horses' heads for some distant hills, keeping them as straight as possible for the Inhslazatye. But it was by no means an easy matter to preserve the right line, this rough and rugged manner of travelling obliging us many and many a time to make long detours in order to circumvent some uncrossable gulf or precipitous height. Long before reaching the Inhslazatye the sun had bidden us adieu, and the moon usurped its place, by whose light we found it no easy matter to make out the right road. Had it not been for the friendly directions given us by a Zulu, it is my firm conviction that we should have been forced to pass the night beneath the slopes of the Evergreen Mountain,

which,—tired, hungry, and thirsty as were ourselves and our horses,—would, I may venture to assert, not have been an acceptable ending to our day's journey.

It was nearly ten o'clock when we reached the camp that night. For seventeen hours, with the exception of the two short off-saddles, the horses had been on the move, and were proportionately weary in consequence. We lazy creatures, who had availed ourselves of their willing services all day, were victims more to hunger and thirst than weariness. Breakfast that morning we had had none, and the lunch had been necessarily restricted; therefore we welcomed the repast laid out in General Buller's tent, which having enjoyed, we retired contented and satisfied to bed, learning, as we proceeded, whither the troops were under orders to march on the morrow.

So the next day the old business was recommenced; it was the last of our sojourn with the squadrons. General Buller pushed forward at a quick rate for Newcastle, and we prepared to separate from the column next day. Our horses were picked and chosen; the few things we needed were packed and laid ready for the pack-horse; Tom received instructions to remain with

the troops until reaching Newcastle, then to hurry down country with our things to Maritzburg; while we girded ourselves for the great ride we had in prospect, which, in pursuance of a plan I had been forming during my sojourn in Zululand, had the object in view of ascertaining the desire of a nation on the subject of its captive king's return. That night we ate our farewell dinner with the 15th; and the next morning, before the troops were on the move, we bade them all good-bye. Needless here to dwell on the hospitality and kindness we had received from every one during our sojourn in South Africa—the pages of this book have amply demonstrated the fact; but looking back on these few brief months during which we had the pleasure to share with them their home on the Veldt, it is with feelings of gratitude that I herein recall the welcome and the hospitality which was tendered us by all.

CHAPTER XXVI.

A NATIONAL DESIRE—OPPRESSION—THE BLOODY HAND—THE MONUMENT OF NATURE—THE LAST OF ZULULAND—UM-SINGA — BLOBS IN JEOPARDY — SIR EVELYN WOOD IN SWAZILAND—REGRET—VELDT COSTUMES—AN ABIGAIL'S OPINION OF CAPE TOWN.

IT is neither my intention, nor is it in the province of this book, to give an account of our journey. The inseparable facts connected with it which would have to be recorded and commented upon are sufficient in themselves to fill the pages of another book. It is enough here to remark that, during this pilgrimage of inquiry, I obtained that information which it has been the work of both resident and Government authorities, and interested parties, to keep concealed from the public. That information consists in an almost universal desire on the part of the Zulu nation for their king's return. This desire is, for the most part, participated in by the reigning chiefs, with the exception of Oñam, Zibebu, and Umfanawendhlela, John Dunn being of course included; but the people they govern

are discontented and oppressed, and are united with the rest of the nation in longing for their king's return, under whom they were a prosperous and happy people. By every species of petty tyranny on the part of these chiefs and the authorities, this universal desire is curbed and suppressed. The relations—the son, the brothers, and the wives of the king—are, by theft and confiscation, reduced to beggary. They are told to go and settle in those spots reigned over by their bitterest enemy; and, to enforce this order, their possessions are taken from them. It is vain for the people to protest, for their protestations are unheeded. All this, so far back as last August, I wrote and told the English people; since which day the troubles that I foretold have commenced. Who has not heard of the ruthless treatment by John Dunn in the Stimela and Mlandela affair, and who has not read of the horrible massacre of the Abaqualusi tribe by Oham?—the sole reason for such bloodshed and cruelty being the loyal desire of an oppressed people for the return of their king. By these murders these chiefs have committed a direct breach of the promise they made at their installation, viz. :—“ I will not permit the existence of the Zulu military system, or the existence of

any of the Zulu military organisation whatever, within my territory; I will not make war upon any chief, or chiefs, or people, without the sanction of the British Government." The failure of England to punish these breaches of promise seems to point to the fact that such bloodshed is sanctioned by the British Government; and on it must therefore rest the odium of the bloodthirsty deeds of Zibebu, Oham, and John Dunn.

It was a bright fine morning on which our pilgrimage of inquiry ended. The voice of an aggrieved country had, in fear and secrecy, confided to me its miserable story; and fresh from an interview with Hlubi, who dwells close to Rorke's Drift, we were riding slowly over a rough, rugged, and hilly country to visit the scene of disaster and death which had rewarded the first efforts of England to tear from a noble and unoffending people their dearly-prized liberty, their king, and their country. Isandhlwana—or, as people in England are pleased to term the place, Isandula—was the object of our visit; and from Hlubi's location, accompanied by our interpreter, we were riding slowly in that direction. Gaunt heights rose before us, behind us, and all around; the bright flashing waters of the Buffalo gleamed far below in a silver streak of light; the fords

of Rorke's and Fugitive's Drifts, widely distant from each other, were equally distinct ; and above them all, away to the eastward, overlooking one of Zululand's grandest and noblest scenes, towered the lofty peak of Isandhlwana — The Bloody Hand.

A gently-rising slope leads upwards from a small watercourse to the Nek, across which the doomed troops passed ere they pitched their camp on an undulating plain on the other side of the mountain. Here the ranges of the Ngutu and Ndlazayazi Mountains bound on the north and south a far-stretching tract of country, which, connected with other hills, fades away, mystic and indistinct, on the distant horizon. Even now many traces of the terrible struggle remain ; and cairns, on some of the most available heights of the crag, show where bands of our dead countrymen were discovered—whither, doubtless, they had retreated, disputing to the last the unequal odds of that fierce and desperate struggle. Who, standing on this spot of bitter memory, cannot picture to himself the terrible sight which greeted the eyes of Lord Chelmsford's returning party, as, amidst a silence—the silence of death—and in the deep twilight of a blood-stained day, they came upon this scene? Worse than this :

when the news of this crushing disaster reached him who, by his policy of invasion, was mainly responsible for the lives of England's sons, what bitter thoughts must have welled up in that mind which could not fail therein to behold the first grievous result of his unmerited and unprovoked attack on a nation whom, for this deed, even we, in our bitterness, cannot blame?

Riding across the battlefield, I directed my horse's head towards the tiny cemetery, which, from the high grass and rank weeds that grew in and around it, was almost invisible. The animal's foot striking against something hard, made him stumble; and, looking for the cause, an upturned skull informed me of it at once. Hardly two years have passed away, and already, in their lonely resting-place, these victims of a murderous policy are forgotten. The men who suffered for England's sin, hastily buried and pushed out of sight, are left for wind and weather to sweep away the few inches of earth that cover them; the rank weeds and giant grass that grow around will ere long obliterate the spot, and men in the next generation will ask, "Where sleep our unfortunate comrades,—the innocent victims of a wretched policy?" and the answer must come back in the gratitude of nations, "It is unknown ;

we have forgotten; there is no trace to mark the spot."

But a monument remains, even greater than man's most regal works,—a monument which will ever overshadow the last resting-place of England's sons, and whose rugged grandeur will overlook this spot long after the memory of generations has vanished. Than the lofty Isandhlwana no fitter monument could be erected, and no more appropriate sign could mark the spot than that of "The Bloody Hand."

In the little kraal-built mission station hard by we brought ourselves to anchor for the night. The next day was to be our last in Zululand; a long and sharp ride was yet before us. Even Punch's sturdy little frame began to look hollow; Nancy was fast becoming a skeleton; and Blobbs had run himself to a shadow. With our separation from the troops, and therefore from the commissariat, forage was not so available, and the land of promise yet lay far beyond a line of distant hills. At the Isandhlwana Mission Station, however, mealies were liberally supplied; and, awaking once or twice in the night, the sound of crunching and munching reached me through the framework of the kraal in which I slept. Towards four o'clock, however, the pro-

longed meal had evidently come to an end, judging by the chorus created by the snores of the two ponies.

Early as we started next morning, we found our hospitable host already stirring. Hot coffee was quickly prepared to speed the parting guests; and, with the newborn sunlight playing upon and lighting up the grim features of the Isandhlwana, we set off on our journey. Avoiding the rocky, dangerous ford at Fugitive's Drift, we held on for Rorke's, crossing the Buffalo at this point; and having paid a visit to the Mission Station, which was in the occupation of some half-dozen masons who were busily engaged in building, we rode down to some tents pitched close by the river, in the occupation of several officers of an engineer troop. They gave us a good breakfast, which we duly appreciated, and on which we contemplated performing a good portion of our journey that day. We had already come ten miles,—Helpmakaar lay distant yet another twenty-five,—and we proposed to reach Mooi River that night, forty miles farther on. Altogether, Punch and Nancy were asked to accomplish seventy-five miles before the sun went down, which I am bound to acknowledge was little short of cruelty; but then we promised them their reward after

the following day, when, having reached Maritzburg, they should rest and make merry.

Many a time, as we pushed on for Helpmakaar, I turned to look at Zululand, whose rugged outlines were gradually fading astern. Twelve or thirteen miles from Rorke's Drift we began the ascent of a steep winding hill which connects the upper and lower Veldt together. Before this road was made, the climb must have been both hazardous and difficult, for the sheer fall is as nearly perpendicular as possible, and of a great height. As we ascended we could see that the summit was wrapped in a dense mist, which, contrasted with the clear shining valley we were leaving, was very remarkable; far away, a mere speck now on the distant horizon, the sign of "The Bloody Hand" still stood forth in the flashing sunlight; while the whereabouts of Rorke's Drift, that scene of British heroism, could still be made out by the rugged landmark which, in the shape of the steep Oscar Berg, overlooks the Mission Station.

This was our last glimpse of Zululand; in another moment we had entered the clouds; the bright fair land was hidden from our sight, perhaps for evermore; and for the next two hours we ploughed our way through the coldest, dampest, and densest mist it has ever been my lot to witness.

Helpmakaar reached, the horses were relegated to a stable, and treated to oat-hay and an hour's rest. As for ourselves, we spent the time in visiting the cemetery and fort, and in buying a few things from a well-stocked store, which, in conjunction with the inn and one or two other shanties, claimed to form the proud location of Helpmakaar. At this place we parted from our interpreter and guide,—he proceeding in the direction of Newcastle, we going in exactly the opposite direction. With the renewal of our journey the mist cleared off, and the horses, refreshed by their short rest, went along merrily enough. The stage was a long one, however,—twenty-eight miles,—and they wearied a good deal ere reaching the Tugela River. With the disappearance of the mist it had become intensely hot ; but, fortunately for ourselves and the horses, the Umsinga country, through which we were then passing, was wooded and fertile, and for most part of the day we rode along under the grateful shade of a dense and luxuriant vegetation, through which the road we were following must have been cut with extreme difficulty.

A very lovely country is this Umsinga district,—the wooded Highlands of Natal. Rich in bush and glade, exquisite glimpses of scenery con-

tinually present themselves; while the glowing tints of bright and gorgeous colouring, glittering beneath the flashes of an almost tropical sun, render the effect of so brilliant a nature as can be compared only to the multifarious and quickly-changing flashes of the diamond. Anon our road led us through dense tracts of woodland, so thick as to defy entrance and so lofty as to hide from sight the mighty crags that towered around; then soft glades would intervene, or gently-falling slopes open the secrets of some darkling valley; while, above these changeful scenes of Nature, rugged steeps clothed in masses of vegetation looked down on the home of the wild black man.

Here the Kaffir, in this district awarded him by the conquerors of Natal, lives peacefully and contentedly. High up the mountain slopes, far down in the valleys below, amidst glen and opening glade, the neat kraals nestle. Very picturesque they look; and the blue curling smoke of their fires mingling with the scarlet, the blue, the violet, the yellow, and the green of a variegated garden of Nature, serves to clothe the whole gorgeous array in a transparent veil, which flashes alternate gold and silver beneath the warm effulgence of a burning sun.

At a cosy little inn on the banks of the Tugèla River we off-saddled; the horses were relegated to a cool stable and liberally supplied with forage. Since leaving Isandhlwana that morning they had performed a distance of sixty-three miles, and yet twelve remained to be accomplished ere their resting-place at Mooi River was reached that night. I must confess that, cognisant as I was of the Colonial horses' power of endurance, these triumphs of Nancy and Punch surprised me. Since the morning of our start for Ulundi, after the Inhlazatye meeting, they had been continually on the go, performing long and rapid journeys every day, with somewhat gaunt frames it is true, but with legs unfilled and in a condition perfectly marvellous. Decidedly Punch and Nancy were prodigies, as indeed they proved themselves to be.

Since leaving Helpmakaar we had been gradually descending from those heights which we had gained in the mist until, on the Tugèla banks, the full depth of the Umsinga valley had been reached. Now, in front of the inn, rose a steep winding incline, cut in the giant barrier of the valley,—the thin white streak visible near the summit showing whither the road wound; and on this white streak so high above us and miles

away, we frequently cast anxious eyes, while the question was often put and debated as to whether it would be wise to attempt the ascent that day.

Anxiety to get forward as quickly as possible overruled hesitation ; and the horses, having finished their meal, were mercilessly brought forth once more. In crossing the Tugela, Blobbs was carried away by a rapid, and narrowly escaped a watery grave. He, however, wisely allowed himself to float with the stream until a friendly rock afforded him safety. To this he clung until Punch and I managed to reach him, when, dripping and very exhausted, he was landed on the opposite bank amidst great rejoicings. Had Blobbs died there would have been wailing and gnashing of teeth, and the bright Umsinga valley would have been hidden in a dark cloud.

It took us two hours to reach the summit of the barrier, and I cannot say we were not tired on arriving at the Mooi River that night ; for we were decidedly so. Here we found two mounted Natal police, one of whom proved to be a gentleman named Crosswaithe, a fellow - passenger with us from England on board the *Warwick Castle*, whom we had christened "the Dodling." He and his comrade Mr. Knox entertained us with the best of the cheer which the resources

of the primitive inn afforded, and accompanied us next day for the first ten miles of our journey.

On this last day of our long trekking I will not dwell at length, beyond remarking that Punch having rolled in the night on a back somewhat tender had a large watery lump on it next day, This was awkward; but, lump or no lump, his services were required. However, on arriving at Greytown,—twenty miles from Mooi River,—I succeeded in procuring another horse, and Punch was led, for the next forty-three miles, into Maritzburg. Very weary, very stiff, and very thankful at reaching our journey's end were we; and, in making the same assertion for the ponies, I think I rightly convey their feelings. For Blobbs' opinion I cannot, however, vouch; this extraordinary little personage was apparently as fresh as ever,—his blistered feet seemed to cause him no inconvenience, and the many hundred miles traversed by those tiny pats appeared to have had the effect of instilling vigour instead of weariness into his frame. Punch and Nancy were prodigies, but I think Blobbs handicapped them both, and his bright example should be held up to the eyes of any drone into whose hands this book may fall.

The night of our arrival, Sir Evelyn reached

Maritzburg, and arrived at Government House amidst the thunder of artillery. Since leaving us at the Inhslazatye, he and his party had ridden by way of the Inhlobane, crossed the Zuinge Nek and Intombi River, and thence made their entry into Swaziland. Forging the Inguenpisi and Great Usutu Rivers, they traversed "the tropical island," and were received by its chief, who is uncle to Umbadeen, king of Swaziland. Thence they journeyed to Lodidi,—the tribal kraal and capital of the country,—where Sandhlwana, the prime minister, met them and conducted them to his own kraal. After this they were interviewed by Umbadeen himself, under the welcome shade of a shield house, and entered into palaver. On taking leave of the king they had travelled on, crossed the Black Umvoloosi, and ascended the Lebombo Mountains, descending their eastern slopes towards Delagoa Bay; at Bombei a boat from H.M.S. *Firebrand* took them off to the gunboat, whose head was at once pointed for Durban, this latter place being reached after three days' rough coasting. They arrived in Maritzburg a few hours after us, beaten just a head on the post.

And now the time drew nigh when final partings had to be spoken; for by an early train

we proposed to leave for Durban next day. At the appointed hour the little platform of Pietermaritzburg Railway Station was more than usually occupied, and gay with military personages, amongst whom was the hero of Maiwand.¹ Sir Evelyn and his staff had donned a more brilliant attire than that of Veldt renown, and every one looked very smart. As the train began to move out of the station there echoed a chorus of good-byes, and a fair amount of hand-shaking went on through the open windows. But the train was merciless, it would wait for no one, and amidst the echoes of final partings it glided away,—platform, friends' faces, and finally Maritzburg, faded from sight, and with them the old days of camp life and the free Bohemian wanderings of the past six months were over; back to civilisation we were hastening, while the dream of all we had left behind still clung longingly around the awaking vision of Change.

At Durban we were detained several days by extremely heavy weather, but at last the bar became navigable, and we were quickly on board our old friend *The Melrose*. I must confess that, for the first time in my life with aught navigable, I experienced a sensation of disgust

¹ Major Slade, brother to Sir Evelyn Wood's aide-de-camp.

as I boarded her. The smell of oil, the general cramped feeling that prevailed, and the sights and scenes inseparably connected with life on board a passenger steamer, sickened and irritated me. Many a longing look I cast back to the green slopes of the Berea, amidst which cosy country-seats nestled; while the broad endless tracts of the free unconfined Veldt rose up in memory's vision, and left me discontentedly comparing my past free unrestrained existence with the present cramped and confined one. But the anchor is up and the ship is under weigh; no more time for thoughts such as these,—so they are banished. Durban is receding quickly from sight; and, through the golden sunlight that envelops her, I take my last look of the place which is endeared in my memory by the hospitable and kindly courtesy tendered me by many of its leading inhabitants. A fresh wind is blowing, and the vessel begins to toss about; down to their stuffy cabins rush the majority of the passengers; everybody is more or less sick, and, ashamed as I am to confess it, I find myself selfishly rejoicing in their malady as being a means of ridding the deck of squalling children and unpleasant scenes. Once more the rocky coast of Kaffraria heaves in sight; we coast along it in a regular storm; the wind shrieks

through the rigging, doing its best to drown the wild weird notes of the boatswain's whistle; the little *Melrose* rolls frightfully, gallantly battling the waves, nevertheless, in her labouring career; groans and cries float up from below; and I, leaning over the vessel's stern, watch the receding waves hurled into chaos by the disdainful paddle, and, watching the long white streak which it leaves behind, dreamland merges into reality as I feel now we are fairly pointed for home.

We were looking forward to meeting my youngest brother, who had come out to Cape Town with the intention of joining us in Zululand; being delayed, however, he had decided to await us at the Cape, and during the past three weeks had been the guest of Sir Hercules and Lady Robinson. On reaching Cape Town, we therefore repaired to Government House, where we found him flourishing, and the whole household in the same condition. Sir Hercules having entertained them with a detailed account of the picture presented by myself in the poor, travel-stained, well-worn habit of Pretoria renown, there was a cry of disappointment and surprise, on greeting us, at not finding me attired therein. I was therefore obliged, though reluctantly, to explain to Lady Robinson

that the habit in question was absolutely unfit for further wearing. Sir Evelyn had described it as "the looking-glass,"—so glazed had it become,—and after that severe criticism I was bound to get another skirt made. My first efforts in this direction were made at Ladysmith. Purchasing some serge, I held a consultation with the tailor of the 14th Hussars, who undertook to manufacture the required article. Fearing that he, having never made a riding-skirt before, might take for his pattern the long, sweeping, full skirts of olden days, I endeavoured to impress upon him that what I required was a short and a tight one. The day of its arrival, I hastened to try it on. It was tight and short with a vengeance! Short,—inasmuch as it did not reach my ankles by several inches; and tight,—inasmuch as, though it buttoned (!) all down the front, when I came to try and fasten it across my knees, it refused to meet! The worthy tailor's thoughts must have been far away in Austria and Austrian fashions when he framed this costume. On the principle that "if you don't at first succeed, try, try again," I purchased some more serge and placed my hopes, in this second venture, in the tailor of the 15th Hussars. He made a crowning effort, and was somewhat more successful; true, it was not

exactly a Wolmershausen shape, still it answered as good a purpose, and did me some service in Zululand. Should my reader be curious to learn the fate of "the looking-glass," I can satisfy his curiosity by informing him that, when I last saw it, it was adorning the body of a Kaffir forelouper, who, in his proud possession of the same, was flaunting himself in full dress before the envious and admiring gaze of a few fellow Kaffirs, whose apparel, however, partook more of Nature's garb.

With this full explanation as to the fate of "the looking-glass," every one was obliged to rest content; we turned our attention to the discussion of a welcome breakfast, which at that moment made its appearance. The bells of Cape Town at the same time began to sound their warning notes, and the Government House party were obliged to hurry off and attend divine service, it being Sunday. While eating, we got from my brother the latest home news which he had brought,—some six weeks old, it is true, yet still acceptable to us after our long separation from the old country. I next proceeded upstairs to make an examination of a box of clothes for which I had written home to England, and instructed my maid to send out to Cape Town. Judging by

the selection of old things which it contained, and which I certainly thought I had seen for the last time many months before I left England, the opinion of the worthy abigail as to the size and importance of Cape Town must have been somewhat misty and vague. Doubtless, in her thoughts, she pictured me the guest of some dusky dignitary, surrounded by wild blacks, while Government House and the town itself figured in her mind as a few mud huts!

The rest of the day was spent in ease and indolence. In the cool verandah of Government House, or under the shade of its stately oak avenue, many a cosy nook peeped from its hiding-place; while the glare and heat outside could find no admittance through the thick leafy canopy of Old England's noblest tree. The oaks around Government House are one of the sights of Cape Town; they have flourished well in this almost tropical heat, as their size and height indicate.

For ten days we remained the guests of the Robinsons, and a very pleasant ten days they were. Cape Town, Wynberg, Constantia, and the surrounding districts, were thoroughly explored, and many a gorgeous bit of scenery rewarded our wanderings. Time flew very quickly by, and the hour for departure came on

space ; to it we looked forward with a mixture of regret and pleasure, — regret 'at leaving our kind friends in South Africa, and pleasure'at the thought of seeing Old England again. One night Lady Robinson gave a big reception and ball, which was kept up till a late hour ; there was a large concourse of people, for which, however, the great dimensions of the ballroom afforded ample space, and all the guests appeared to enjoy themselves very much. I must, however, confess that my feet were extremely tender next day.

CHAPTER XXVII.

CETSHWAYO—THE KING'S WORDS—ENGLAND'S PROMISE—THE
MODERN JUDAS — THE KING'S MESSAGE TO ENGLAND —
REASONING—A KINGLY RESIDENCE—THE VISIT TO GOVERN-
MENT HOUSE—A DREAM OF THE PAST.

As the days slipped quickly away, and the time approached which was to bring with it our departure for England, I remembered my promise made nine months previously to Cetshwayo, that I should visit him on my return from Zululand and give him news of his country. Accordingly, a few days after the ball at Government House, accompanied by my husband and brother, I drove out to Oude Molen to visit the Zulu king.

By several people who had not long since seen him, I had been informed of the sad state of depression into which he seemed to be plunged; and I therefore expected to find him more or less wretched. I was not, however, prepared for the great visible alteration discernible in his features, which wore the pinched careworn look of a deep-

seated trouble. Certainly he was greatly changed, —his forehead was more deeply wrinkled, and his face had aged terribly. As the carriage drove up to the door of the king's residence he almost immediately made his appearance, welcoming me with a hearty hand-shake, but a sad and short-lived smile. Turning to the interpreter I remarked on the change for the worse visible in the king's appearance, to which that gentleman made answer that it was not to be wondered at, seeing how deeply he was continually fretting.

"I am come, Cetshwayo," said I, "to tell you that I have just returned from Zululand. I thought it might please you to receive news of your country; and I am here to answer any questions I can, which you may desire to put to me."

Through the interpreter I then proceeded to relate to him all I had seen and heard in the country. When I came to the meeting of chiefs at the Inhslazatye he became very much interested, frequently interrupting me to ask questions. "Tell me," he said, "the names of the chiefs who were present." I complied with his request, and he was much struck by the absence of so many from the meeting. I told him of my conversation with some of the indunas and chief men, and how they had expressed such earnest wishes to have

their king back. "I am sure," said he, "that it is the wish of the Zulu nation that I should return; it is only those who are frightened and held in check by John Dunn that oppose my restoration." "I conversed," I said, "at the Inhslazatye with Mgojana, one of the chiefs who were present, and he is greatly anxious for your return, as are also, he tells me, Siwungusa, Faku, Somkele, Mlandela, Seketwayo, Mgitshwa, and Ntshingwayo." "Yes, yes," he replied; "they wish me back, and so do the Zulu people. All I love is in Zululand; my heart is there, where lies my father's grave. I am heart-sick and weary with waiting. When will England be just, and let me return? Do you think that because I am a black man I cannot feel, or suffer the less by this long, long, and weary captivity? England has given the Transvaal back to the Boers, Basutoland to the Basutos, Sekukuni is restored to his people, and all are free but I. How is it so? What have I done that I should be so treated? When I fought against you it was to defend my country. I was taken prisoner, and I felt that one stronger than I had beaten me, and that power I acknowledged. But now you keep me here, where I am weary and sick at heart." I have appealed to England, whom they

tell me is great and just—to her Queen, whom they say is merciful ; but my prayer is unheeded, and I am still lonely here.”

I have repeated as faithfully as possible Cetshwayo's words as they were interpreted to me by the interpreter. The king spoke slowly and distinctly, but in a lower tone than he had originally used, and until his voice ceased he kept his eyes fixed upon my face. His whole bearing was dignified and majestic ; he was neither flurried nor excited ; but there was a pleading sadness in his voice which was very touching. I replied “that England would undoubtedly, ere long, do justice to him, but that he must be patient, and wait a little while longer.” I told him “that public feeling was gradually rising in his favour.” I begged him “not to be downhearted, to keep up his spirits, that justice would ere long restore him to the country he yearned for, and to the nation who longed for his return ; and I pointed out to him that he had many friends abroad who were working hard in his cause.” I spoke to him of his future visit to England, and told him that on his return from that country it might be as a restored king of Zululand. “I am waiting,” he said, “for a reply to my prayer addressed to England to allow me to proceed there immediately.

I am growing weary and impatient that I do not receive a reply." I had that morning been informed by his Excellency that a telegram from Lord Kimberley had arrived signifying the intention of the Government that Cetshwayo would not be allowed to visit England before the coming summer, the governor telling me that he intended to send for the king the next day in order to acquaint him with this decision. Knowing, therefore, the substance of this disappointing news, I endeavoured to prepare him for its reception, and strongly advised him not to think of visiting England during the winter time, but to endeavour to make up his mind to await the arrival of the summer, when so many people of influence would be gathered together in London, and all the sights most worthy of seeing would be available. "I am too impatient to return to my country to willingly wait," he replied. "You, who are not a prisoner, cannot understand how weary and miserable I am—how heart-sick and lonely. You tell me to be patient; but have I not been so until I can be so no longer? If I am to live, they must let me go; a little longer of this and I shall die." "Tell Cetshwayo," I said to the interpreter, "that he is a brave man, and brave men should never give in. As his friend I ask him to be

patient yet awhile : if it is for his future good that he should not visit England before the summer time, will he not try to remember this, and await that time in patience ?” In two words the king answered this question of mine. “What does he say ?” I asked the interpreter. “He says,” replied the man, “that he will try, but his heart is sad.”

In trying to convey all the nobility and courage which those few words evinced this unfortunate captive capable of, I but feebly represent the case. In those simple words—“I will try, but my heart is sad”—can be traced a reply at once noble and dignified. It depicts a courage that rises to bear misfortune, with nothing to make the pain less hard ; and it shows that Cetshwayo, who has been represented as a cruel bloodthirsty despot and tyrant, possesses that which many white men, with civilisation and education around them, entirely lack, and which they may well envy—*i.e.* a nobility of soul, dignity, and courage in misfortune, which makes him in all he says “every inch a king.”

I inquired of him whether, in the event of his being restored to his country, he would consent to allow John Dunn to remain in Zululand. “^{6A}Why should I do so ?” he replied. “When I reigned^{5c}

in that country I treated John Dunn as my friend; his return was to act as a spy between me and the English Government. He told them much that was false; he harmed me in all the ways he could; he never could be my friend again; how can I then forgive him and live in peace with a man who treated me so badly after I had treated him so well?" In all Cetshwayo says he reasons with a truth and good sense which it is impossible not to perceive. Naturally he wonders how it is that a man like John Dunn should be placed as chief in power. Here is a man who ignores in many ways the laws of civilisation. In the late struggle with Sitimela, when he advanced against him to restore Mlandela, women and children who belonged to the rebellious side found no quarter at his hands. All who fell in his way were massacred without mercy; it is a fact which cannot be contradicted, for all who know anything about the matter are aware that this is the truth. When Cetshwayo killed women and children he was called a merciless despot, but when John Dunn does likewise the affair is hushed up, the matter is not even reported, and no blame is attached to this white usurper of black rights. We have endeavoured to instil into the minds of the natives

that it is wrong to take to their homes 'more than one wife; yet John Dunn, this white chieftain, who is supposed to set them a good example, lives surrounded by a large harem, setting at defiance the white man's law, which we pretend we are desirous the black should follow.

I remained some time with Cetshwayo talking to him about his people and Zululand. He clung to the subject as though it had a peculiar charm for him. His interpreter assured me that he had not seemed so interested in anything for a long time, and it was quite refreshing to see the king so cheerful. On one point he was very anxious, and that was to obtain news of three of his chiefs whom he hoped would be allowed to join him, in his captivity and proceed with him to England. "Had I seen them?" he asked. I replied that the men in question had journeyed a long distance on foot, and had endeavoured to catch Sir Evelyn Wood at the Inhslazatye meeting, but were unfortunate enough not to succeed. The last I had heard of them was that they were on their way from that place to Pietermaritzburg, hoping there to obtain an interview with the General, and lay before him their prayer, which begged permission to be granted them to join Cetshwayo at Capetown and share with him

his captivity. Anxiously the king inquired whether this permission would be granted by Government, to which I replied that I could not say, but that doubtless it would, as there could be hardly any reason for refusing. After this I told him that it was time I should leave, as my visit had been somewhat prolonged. He asked me how soon I intended leaving for England, and when I told him he exclaimed, "Oh, why cannot I go too?" "Have you any message to send to the English people which I can transmit for you?" I asked. "Yes," replied Cetshwayo, with grave dignity; "tell them that I am a king and a captive; that I am alone and helpless; that I am very sad and almost heartbroken; that they should not believe all the ill they hear of me; ask them to be my friend, and to help me. I have no more to say." As I was saying good-bye to the interpreter Cetshwayo held out his hand again, and I shook hands once more. As I did so he said a few words. "He is thanking you for being his friend," said the interpreter; "he says he will not forget your kindness, and will always be your friend. Perhaps he may be able some day to prove his gratitude when he becomes king again."

. On leaving Oude Molen I drove to the farmhouse occupied by Langalebalele, close by. My interview with this old chief was short; he appeared very anxious to know if Cetshwayo was going to England. He frequently walks across to Oude Molen on a visit to the king, but Cetshwayo has only once condescended to return the call; it appears that it is an act of the greatest condescension for a king to visit his subject, however great the chief may be. In this narrative I have faithfully reported what occurred on the occasion of my visit to the king. In the last simple words with which he begged me to transmit to the English public his prayer that they should help one "who was a king, who was lonely and helpless, sad, and almost heartbroken," he did not speak with a grasping eagerness or excitement, but with a grave intense sadness, which showed and forced the listener to realise how much he felt all that he was saying. His words, eloquent in themselves, should appeal and strike home to the heart of a nation whose desire is for justice. Is it not something more than cruel that this unfortunate man should be kept captive when the nation of whom he is the rightful king so universally desires his return? Circumstances and the march of events demand

that the present policy should change. Time has brought the moment when the peace and tranquillity of Zululand is at stake, for the reason that there is no one to rule it, no one whom its people will respect and obey. Cetshwayo has seen our power, and were he restored he would fight against the English no more. He says himself, and his people say so too, that they do not wish to fight with England, but desire to live in peace with her for ever. We have given the Transvaal to the Boers, Sekukuni is restored to his people, Basutoland has been given back to the Basutos; in Afghanistan the same policy has been pursued. Cetshwayo alone remains a prisoner. Is this a fair or just policy? is this treatment such as it should be? Let the sense of fair-play and generosity answer for itself in the breasts of the English public. The letters addressed by the captive from his dreary solitude at Oude Molen to Lord Kimberley, in his ease and comfort at home, are not those of an ignorant or cruel despot, but in every line they show a nobility of soul, a greatness and sagacity, a sense of wisdom and reason, which the heart of a savage could not conceive. Let England do justice to a man who is kept in a cruel and unfair captivity, who has appealed to a nation, whose might and sense

of justice he acknowledges, to help and protect him. His very loneliness and utter helplessness should appeal more forcibly than anything to every heart which is not poisoned by the gross misrepresentations of interested parties as to the state of affairs in Zululand and the wishes of the Zulu people. There is little doubt that our military prestige is much weakened in the eyes of the Zulu people. In their wish to get back their king they may reason to themselves that if the Boers can defeat us they can likewise do so. The result of this reasoning will show itself before long in anarchy and rebellion. The chiefs placed over them they neither respect nor obey, and it is in a moment like this that Cetshwayo as our ally would be most acceptable. In the *Times* of the 23d of August 1881 a letter appeared from a member of the Legislative Council of Natal in which the following remark appears:—"No colonist wishes ill to Cetshwayo. None grudge him the surroundings of a comfortable and luxurious exile." Is this meant to imply that he lives in comfort or ease? If this is the opinion of the British public I can assure them they are greatly mistaken. I have seldom seen a more dreary place of abode than that awarded to Cetshwayo; the rooms inhabited by himself and his girls of the kraal are totally

devoid of furniture of any kind; little or no amusement is provided for him; if he wishes for any extra comfort, his wants have to be made known through so many channels that it is long before he obtains what he requires. Repeatedly he has asked leave to have a little pocket money allowed him, but this wish has not been granted, and this is characterised as "a luxurious and comfortable exile."

The promise which Cetshwayo made to me in this interview he has faithfully kept; and through ten long weary months, as I write this, he has patiently awaited the fulfilment of Lord Kimberley's promise that he should visit England. The month settled for his visit was April, and, as I write this, it is now June. By plausible and illusory promises Mr. Gladstone and those in office have warded off the evil hour of inquiry into this violation of a sacred pledge. Cetshwayo still languishes in a dreary and miserable captivity.¹ In the month of December last he wrote to me and enclosed two letters, one to the Queen, and the other to the Prince of Wales, which I duly transmitted to their destinations.

¹ Since writing this, the visit of Cetshwayo to England has been definitely fixed for August, about the beginning of which month he will arrive.—(Author, 14th July 1882.)

For this attempt to make his griefs known his interpreter, Mr. Samuelson, has been taken from him, and one of the name of Dunn, a stranger to the king, has been substituted in the place of the dismissed Mr. Samuelson. The king is now a closer captive than ever. He is powerless to appeal; he is utterly helpless and alone. Will not the sense of justice assert itself in the breast of an apathetic English public? and will not that English public awake to the dishonour and cruelty of the act which stains the fame and greatness of England? The king has appealed to England: will England let his prayer pass unheeded?

The day following that of my visit to Oude Molen, Cetshwayo came himself to Government House to learn from Sir Hercules Robinson the contents of Lord Kimberley's telegram with regard to his visit to England. I was not present when the message which was to inform him of the many months which must elapse ere he could visit England was communicated to him; but I am assured by one present that the only sign this brave man showed of his great disappointment was in a slight contraction of the face and a nervous movement of the hands. In a few words he had the day before promised me to

be patient—and the promise was faithfully kept, Only those who knew his wishes could guess the hopes that telegram dashed to the ground, or the acute pain the announcement must have caused.

Later in that day I tried to cheer the king up by conducting him through the different rooms of Government House. The bedrooms upstairs, the electric bells, and the beds themselves, greatly interested him. Many were the long-drawn exclamations of surprise which he gave vent to as some new object astonished and delighted him. Mr. Samuelson, the interpreter, told me that he liked to look at the House; he would like to build a similar one in his own country whereat to entertain his white friends when they should visit him, if he was ever King of Zululand again.

Soon after this he took his leave and drove back to Oude Molen. The last words he addressed to me were to entreat me not to forget or forsake his cause. I promised him, and that promise I have endeavoured faithfully to fulfil.

With the departure of Cetshwayo to his dreary home, my story draws to an end. The following day was that fixed for our departure, and our passages were taken and berths booked on board the Union Company's steamship *Durban*, bound for Old England. We calculated on getting home in

time for the opening meet of the Quorn at Kirby Gate, and the prospect of enjoying once more that "sport of kings" helped to some extent to dissipate the cloud of regret which we naturally felt at quitting a country where so much kindness and hospitality had been tendered to us on all sides. But our last evening at Government House found us all more or less sad, and we were in consequence proportionately quiet, and gaiety was less rampant than usual.

The hour of departure arrived at last, and we drove down to the quay with Lady Robinson and her daughters, who came so far to see us off. We found quite a levée of friends assembled, and the deck for a time was gay with many a brilliant uniform, conspicuous amongst which was the cocked hat of Colonel R. Thynne, which simply bristled with waving feathers. Amidst a chorus of good-byes the great vessel glided out of port, and ere long Cape Town, with its stately Lion Hill crowning the background, faded from sight. Then the misty shores of Afric's sunny land grew dim; the great sun-god shot forth his last gold ray; softly rose the queen of night to hold her reign, the dark waters of the ocean received and mirrored her pale beauty; and, as the vessel ploughed its way through the lake-like waters, phos-

phorescent lights danced and gambolled in the broad white track it left behind. Leaning over the stern I long watched these revolving scenes. In the dreams which came and went let me close this wandering tale. A moving panorama of the past nine months revolved its magic-lantern wonder before my eyes; once more arose the waving Veldt of fair Natal, the fairy nooks and sunny scenes around Pretoria, the dismal dreary expanses of the Orange Free State, and the wild uncivilised tracts of Griqualand. Over them all hovered a vision of stretching hills, of fertile valleys, of mighty rivers, and of stately men. It was a vision which came and went, bringing with it memories sad and regretful; for over these scenes of Nature's abundant beauty trembled the stain which war and blood had left behind. "What are you dreaming about?" said a voice at my elbow, and turning round I found my brother standing by me. Dreamland had fled, and in its place stood stern reality. I was after all far away from the scenes I had been recalling, and it was in dreamland only that I had wandered in Zululand again. Round went the screw with painful distinctness; hum and buzz went the tongues of the passengers. Truly, it was an unpleasant awakening!

"Only living the past nine months over again," I answered. "My spirit was far away; but you have recalled it from the Land of Misfortune."

THE END.

